



환생은 관능/ 해가지고

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INTIME FUSION FANTASY STORY

intime

I Reincarnated For Nothing

– 환생은 괜히 해가지고 –

- Part 2 -

**-Author-
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[NaughtyOtter (Wuxiaworld)]

Chapter 22

Yesterday's Enemy (1)

The two heroes enjoyed a fun journey as they rode down the rough waters before they plummeted down the waterfall. They fell down an unknown distance towards the bottom of the ravine, and they were barely able to pick themselves out of the water.

His entire body ached, and his stomach was writhing. There was a long abrasive injury on his back, and his entire body was soaked. It was the worst feeling. He never wanted to experience it again.

“Ooh-ehhhhhk. Kol-ruhk, kol-ruhk.”

Artpe was making a bizarre sound as he threw up water. The sound was horrible enough to cool even a thousand year love. However, Maetel stood next to Artpe, and her expression remained normal. She looked worried as she patted Artpe’s back.

“Are you ok, Artpe?”

“I’m not ok! Unlike you, I can’t maintain balance while being swept away by the waterfall!”

“Why not? After I realized what was happening, I just had to wiggle my body a little bit.....”

At that moment, Artpe didn’t find himself to be endearing, since he was having malicious thoughts towards Maetel. The feeling was so intense that it made him wonder if he could have won miraculous battles as one of the Four Heavenly Kings if he had been full of malice like this!

“I wish I was hurting instead of Artpe.....”

However, he was confronted with the sincerely worried face of Maetel, so such feelings melted away. Artpe became needlessly embarrassed, so he turned his gaze away from her as he replied in a small voice.

“It’s nothing. It doesn’t hurt that much, so it’s fine.”

“Really? What a relief.”

Artpe had worried his belongings might have been lost, while he was being swept away by the waterfall. He checked his belongings, and everything was still there. He still had the two money pouches and the black egg.

Maetel still had the potion pouch within her armor, and she had held on tightly to her bastard sword and longsword. She was slowly becoming acclimatized to the fact that there were some things that were more important than one’s life as an adventurer.

It was also a fact that the two heroes were equally soaked. To make things worse, it was closer to winter than fall. The chilly winds were lowering their body temperature.

“Should I make a fire?”

“Yes, I’m cold.”

Maetel had a shy smile on her face as she nodded her head. Artpe looked up at the violet sky. It was slowly getting darker. A year had passed, so he wondered if it was possible that the soldiers of the kingdom was still searching for them near here.

“Mmm. Even if they are still searching for us, It doesn’t matter anymore.”

Even if one discounted their levels, the skills they possessed were formidable. They would be able to face down even a level 200 being possessing a high rank Class. There was also no way anyone above that level would be looking for them. They had better things to do.

“Here.”

“Wow!”

Artpe extended several strands of Mana String, and he cut down a nearby tree. His actions were so natural that Maetel started clapping. However, Artpe’s performance was just starting.

He created edges on the five black Mana Strings, and he rotated them to cut the tree into small pieces. He only moved a small portion of the wood pile. As a finishing touch,

Artpe used Hyper Rubbing to cause intense friction amongst the wood. It caused it to ignite.

It burst into flame. The whole process took only 25 seconds.

“As expected, Artpe is amazing!”

“If I had a fire magic spell, I could do this in two seconds.....”

He now had a lot of money, so he wondered if he should have bought simple magic spells when he had the chance. Artpe thought about visiting the Tower of Mages in the future as he basked in the fire. Maetel stuck close to him, and she started rubbing her cheek against his cheek.

He was now used to this level of skinship, so Artpe could only let out small sighs. On the other hand, Maetel had a secret smile of triumph on her face.

“Hooo. This is comfortable and great The fact that we aren’t doing anything is pretty good, Artpe.”

“I don’t want you to get infatuated with that feeling. You have to be careful or else you won’t want to do anything else later. The moment you think that work is a losing proposition, your life is at an end.”

In his life as a demon, he had seen those, who hit the jackpot through creating a book or a related item... There were those, who dreamed about not working their entire lives by living off the royalties. However, these people failed to pull it off, because they were lacking in experience and common sense.

“Eh-ee. It is good to do something like this occasionally. If we do it every day, it won’t be as good!”

“.....sometimes you say smart things.”

The two small heroes rested quietly against each other.

It had been a long time since they were able to spend such carefree time. They had been continuously tormented by the internal agents of the Dungeon. Their current situation was tranquil and peaceful.

He didn't feel the need to speak. The sounds of the water flowing in the ravine and the crackling sound of the wood burning drowned out the silence.

When a little bit of time had passed, Maetel opened her mouth to ask a question.

".....Artpe, what are we going to do from now on?"

"What do you want to do?"

"I want to become stronger. I want to help the unfortunate. Moreover, Artpe and I....."

"Yes, you should stop there. Everything you said you'll be able to do to your heart's content."

"Really!?"

Maetel's eyes had an odd shine to it. He was sure she had misunderstood something again. It was a hassle to set her straight, so he just kept his mouth shut. However, at that moment, a loud sound could be heard without any warning.

[Crown Prince... Kill...!]

[Knights... Your highness.....]

The sound of weapons hitting each other could be heard, and he felt the surrounding Mana being consumed to activate a magic spell. Then there was a stern voice and a desperate voice mixed in with those sounds. It was a scenario that might occur at the beginning of a novel about a knight. It was such a formulaic pattern!

When Artpe assessed the commotion, his face crumpled as he mumbled to himself.

"Shit. An incident immediately occurred when you said something unnecessary. I thought I would be able to rest for at least two pages more."

"Do you think I have some ability I don't know about!?"

"No, I think this is just part of our karma."

At that moment, a fight was going on somewhere close by. If Artpe and Maetel hadn't heard it, it wouldn't be a problem. However, once they heard the sound of the fight,

Artpe knew they will get involved one way or another.

“Why?”

“This is how the world works.”

He wanted to say she was always like that in his previous life. However, he pushed down on those words firmly.

Yes, this was the destiny of a hero. It was strange, but wherever the hero went, an incident that might or might not occur in a hundred years happened. The hero inevitably got sucked into the mess, and the hero becomes the main player of the crisis. The hero would solve the problem in a dashing manner, and his or her name value would increase!

Anyways, this wasn't something that happened just once or twice. Wherever a hero went, the hero was always involved in something. There could be an awakening of a legendary ruin, a visitation by an Arch Mage, the awakening of an ancient monster or an assassination attempt of the royal family!

It made one wonder if a hero would die from stress even before he or she got a chance to fight the Demon King. The accidental events that occurred around heroes was frequent and annoying!

“I wonder if such tumult would happen in the first place if the hero hadn't existed. Wherever the hero goes, the unrest follows the hero. This is why we have to kill the god.”

It was such an incoherent explanation. It was like saying an apple farmer had to behead the king, because there was a good harvest. However, Maetel nodded her head in a serious manner.

“I'll kill a god for Artpe!”

“All right. How commendable.”

While Artpe and Maetel was having an idiotic conversation, the sound was getting closer. Screams were interspersed with the sounds of steel clashing. Maetel's body flinched as if she was bothered by it. Artpe could easily read her inner thoughts, so he let out a bitter laugh as he spoke.

“We’ll eventually be swept up into whatever is going on over there, Maetel. If it bothers you, you should go on ahead. I’ll just stay here a little bit longer to warm my body.”

“Ah. No.”

Unexpectedly, Maetel shook her head from side to side.

“It does bother me and I want to rescue them, but... The person I have to protect is Artpe. If I head out carelessly, Artpe might get drawn in. If you were hurt, I would feel like killing myself.”

“What.....?”

It was such an unexpected answer that Artpe was at a loss for words.

Maetel’s love for him was heavy. It was so heavy that he wondered if he’ll be crushed to death by it. On a side note, he was afraid his presence was having a weird influence on the pure hero.

If it was the hero from his past life, she would have immediately ran towards those in trouble, and she would have saved them. It wouldn’t matter if the place held traps or a strong foe.

However, she now had Artpe. She had someone she had to protect. This was why she was hesitating as she mulled over the various consequences of her actions.

Of course, he couldn’t blame her for it. Most people avoided getting involved in another’s trouble. They protected what was important to them. Artpe was merely a former member of the Four Heavenly Kings, so he was a bit happy to find out that Maetel treasured him so much.

Still, he felt as if something was off.

‘When I awoke as a human boy, I surmised that I would become the biggest variable that would cause the biggest change between my past life and this current life... Yes, I was right. I’m the biggest variable. She’s suppose to be the brightest beacon of light, yet this variable was able to bring her down to the level of a regular human...’

He suddenly felt fear, but he didn’t show it. He calmly organized the situation inside his head. He calmly spoke towards the blond-haired girl, who was looking at him.

“That sounds idiotic. We'll become involved anyways. That is why you should just do whatever you feel like doing.”

“I want to be by Artpe's side..... forever.”

“.....yes. All right.”

It felt as if he had received an excessively heavy confession of love, but he dismissed it as him imagining things. Artpe let out a big sigh as he got up.

“Ah. Artpe?”

“Hmmp.”

He had made the fire, because he wanted to create a suitable atmosphere. However, he just need a small amount of Mana to dry their clothes. He emitted a small amount of Mana to dry his underwear and robe. Then he extended his hand to make her body moisture-less.

“Since our clothes are dry now, let's go. If I'm going, will you go?”

“.....yes!”

The two heroes kept talking in a manner unfitting heroes, yet they were finally able to take on work that heroes would undertake. A hero was a violent force that butted into other's fights. The hero attempted to solve problems in a manner to their liking. Heroes were the ultimate busybody. This was what a hero was!

“Since we are about to intrude on someone else's business, I'll tell you about the basic stance we'll take.”

“Yes!”

Artpe ran through the forest with Maetel as he spoke to her. Artpe's stamina was very poor compared to Maetel. However, he had gone past level 140, so he had enough physical prowess to overpower most mercenaries. He wasn't just a simple magician. He possessed the Hero Class and it had influence on him.

“The most difficult part is deciding, which side is the aggressor. We have no idea about the circumstances behind the fight. We have no idea who is good and who is bad. This

kind of stuff isn't as clear cut as one would like it to be."

"Ooh-mmmm. This is too difficult."

"Well, let's say we decided which person we want to kill."

"Heeeek!"

Up until now, she had only slaughtered monsters. Maetel freaked out at the idea of killing a human. As expected, she was immature regarding this type of stuff. Artpe let out a bitter laugh as he continued his explanation.

"What if we find out later that we killed the good guys? What if we helped the bad guys? There are times when such a thing occurs."

"You can't kill good people!"

"However, there could be misunderstandings. The good guys might think we are the bad guys too, and they might fight us."

"No way....."

Unshed tears glistened in the innocent hero's eyes. She was confronted with an explanation that couldn't be accepted by the simplistic values she possessed. This was why her mind was in a state of confusion.

Truthfully, Maetel was incredibly cute right now. How could she be so righteous and innocent! Every time he cause a black stain on her pure white heart it was the sweetest... Crap. A bad habit he picked up during his days as the Four Heavenly King had almost appeared. Artpe calmed himself as he continued to speak his words.

"That is why our standard of judgment can't be absolute good or evil."

"Huh.....?"

"No one can determine what is absolutely good or evil. This is the province of the gods. This isn't something dem... This isn't something should be decided by humans. If we make such judgments, it would be a form of arrogance and delusion."

"Huuuuuuuh.....?"

They were getting closer to the commotion. This was why Artpe had to make this simple. He had to speak with a firm voice, so she would never forget it.

“This is why you should think of anyone that hates you as being evil.”

“.....”

It was a way of thinking more befitting a Demon King than a hero.

“If someone tries to kill you, harm you, use you or have indecent desires... They are all evil. You put yourself on the side of the good, and the others on the side of evil.”

“However, Artpe, you just said we shouldn’t decide what is good or evil.....”

“We aren’t determining absolute good and evil. It is a relative form of good and evil. You accept that you won’t always be right, then you do what you want.”

It was such an absurd, ridiculous and fraudulent way of thinking. Even if Maetel was young and naive, she knew Artpe’s words were wrong. A single slip would make one fall into the pit of evil. It was an absurdly selfish and arrogant way of thinking.

However, he had lived with such a philosophy as a demon for several hundred years. He had been the weakest amongst the Four Heavenly Kings, and he always suffered under irrational violence. This was why he had developed such a mindset.

Nevertheless.....

“Artpe.....”

Maetel raised her still shaking eyes to look at Artpe. She knew they had entered into the site of the fight, yet she still asked the question.

“How do you judge me, Artpe?”

“You dummy. You don’t even have to ask me that question. ”

Artpe lifted the corner of his mouth. He laughed as he made a statement.

“You are ‘always’ in the category of absolute good for me, hero-nim.”

“.....all right, Artpe.”

Maetel firmly nodded her head. Across the thicket, weapons were clashing noisily. She answered him as she threw herself towards the site of the battle.

“Then I’ll do whatever what I want to do!”

Chapter 23

Yesterday's Enemy (2)

There was an open space on the other side of the brush. Blood and metal shavings were flying into the surrounding. In a blink of an eye, a person's life was lost.

There was group trying to protect someone, and the other group was trying to erase someone. All kinds of ambitions were overflowing from them, and the humans were being consumed by it.

"Kill the crown prince! We have to kill that bastard to end all of this!"

"Protect him! We have to protect him!"

Their words made it very easy to identify them! If the world was full of people like them, there would be no need for mind reading magic!

"Uht!?"

"Aht!"

When Artpe and Maetel arrived at the clearing, every participant of the battle noticed their arrival.

One group looked back at them with hope, and the other group looked on with annoyance. However, when they confirmed the identity of the new arrivals, the expressions on both sides crumpled.

"They are children...!"

"Tsk. The number of people we have to take care of increased."

At this point, Artpe had finished dividing them into enemies and allies. He turned to look at Maetel. His expression was like that of a tutor expecting a child to give the right answer.

Her face was full of questions.

“Artpe.”

He knew it was going to be like this. Artpe let out a sigh as he gave her an explanation.

“What did I tell you? You kill those who wants to kill you.”

“Yes!”

“Here.”

Artpe raised his hand, and he pointed towards one group. This particular group was wearing black clothes over their body. It was as if they had shopped from the same cloth store. The crown prince was probably amongst the group fighting a defensive battle. The ones in black had said, ‘The number of people we have to take care of increased.’

“They said they want to take care of us, right?”

“Ah. I see!”

“Then let me pose you a problem. When they said they wanted to take care of us, what were they referring to?”

“Mmmmm. They are going to send us away after giving us an explanation?”

“Wrong. The answer is they will send us to hell without giving us an explanation.”

“How dare they.....”

The two brats had appeared out of nowhere, and they were having a conversation as if they were doing a gag routine. The two groups had been in the midst of fighting for their lives, so the sight in front of them looked ridiculous. Everyone was looking at Artpe’s party in disbelief.

“Shouldn’t you be feeling fear? Or maybe you should start running away? Kids these days are too dumb.”

“Fay... number 3. You take care of them.”

“Yes.”

The black clad group continued attacking the defenders, and only a single one of them ran towards Maetel and Artpe. He used the most popular line within the book called ‘150 Lines Most Used by Villains.’

“Blame your bad luck!”

Artpe took a peek at Maetel. As expected, she was frozen like a statue.

“Maetel.”

“Ah. Ah-oooh.”

She wasn’t afraid of her enemy’s abilities. She was frightened of the truth that she was no longer fighting monsters. She had to face off against a human.

“Ah, Artpe.”

“Hoo.”

He didn’t blame her for acting foolishly in front of an enemy. She was a child, who possessed a tender heart, so this result was to be expected. This reaction was actually preferable. If Maetel had unhesitatingly charged forward to kill the man, Artpe would have been frightened.

Of course, Artpe assessed the situation, and he decided on what he would do.

“Get out of the way, Maetel.”

“Kyahk.”

He had pushed Maetel to the side as he stepped in front of her.

“You are a little brat, but it seems you think of yourself as a man? You plan on protecting the female!”

“Artpe!?”

Artpe made himself the target by stepping forward unarmed. This move incited the

enemy, and it put Maetel on alert. He was killing two birds with one stone.

The generic Villain 1 fell for his provocation. He headed towards Artpe with his sword raised. Maetel had been pushed to the side, and her eyes were wide open as she watched the sight in front of her.

The sharp blade of the enemy was heading towards Artpe, and it was getting bigger in her vision. There was a clear blue tint of Mana surrounding the blade! It was a powerful skill that couldn't be stopped with Artpe's unprotected body.

"I'll give you a clean death! Power Stri... khhhhk!"

Villian 1 had swung his sword towards Artpe. When Maetel saw this, her eyes flipped over as she unsheathed her bastard sword from her waist. She did it with one hand. She wasn't thinking about anything. Her body reacted on instinct.

The Villain 1 was yet to pass level 100, so Maetel split him from the groin to the top of the head.

"Fay... lan...?"

"What the....."

Two weighty sound was heard when the body fell to the floor. At that moment, all sounds within the clearing ceased.

It didn't matter if someone was on the offensive end or the defensive end of the fight. All of them focused their gazes on the girl holding the bastard sword.

"....."

"Crazy... Right now... What did you...?"

Of course, the nearby people were surprised. However, Artpe didn't care about the background characters. Artpe only looked at Maetel.

The girl had killed someone for the first time. She hadn't done it for herself. She had done it for someone else.

"He tried to kill Artpe."

Maetel had seen what she had done, yet she mumbled to herself as if she couldn't believe it. She was gripping the sword so hard that her knuckles were white.

"We just came here... We came here for a look, yet you guys tried to kill Artpe."

"That girl is dangerous. Everyone....."

However, she didn't allow her enemies to talk amongst themselves. Maetel pointed the bastard sword towards the 'enemies' as she asked a question.

She didn't ask it towards her enemies. It was for Artpe.

"Artpe, you said I can do whatever I want to do?"

"I did."

".....all right."

No more words were necessary.

In a flash, Maetel's hesitancy had disappeared.

"Dodge it. Block....."

"Hoo-ahhhhhhhhp!"

Maetel pushed off the ground as she ran forward. She swung her bastard sword laterally. Each of her opponents tried emitting Mana into their weapons or body parts. They were attempting to use a defensive or a counter skill. However, they were all dispatched with a single blow.

There were several high rank Class that were over level 100 present within the group. However, all the defensive technique were canceled by Maetel's basic active attack skill!

"I won't forgive you! I won't! You guys are all bad! That is what I decided!"

She wasn't using Berserk right now. In fact, she hadn't even activated her gauntlet's option yet either. It was quite simple. There was an amazing amount of talent gap between Maetel and the men.

“Koo-ahk!”

“Kah!”

“This is a nightmare. How can such a young child do this against elite knights...!”

The elite knights of the humans were in such a poor state. He now understood why the Demon King had moved at a leisurely pace. Artpe smirked when he realized that the strongest amongst them was barely level 120.

“Run away. There is no way.....”

“I won’t let you run away!”

The number of black clad villains went from 20 to 17, 14, 10..... The number became five, and now there were only two of them.

“W... who sent you! Reveal yourselves!”

“We have to retreat. If we aren’t able to notify the second party about the location of the crown prince... koo-ahk!”

Then there was one.

“I don’t know who you guys are, but you will regret doing this someday.”

Then there were zero.

“Hoo.....”

“Right now... What the hell just happened?”

“All our pursuers are dead. I don’t believe it.....”

After killing everyone, Maetel lightly flicked her bastard sword once to get rid of the blood. After she sheathed her sword, she turned to look at Artpe.

“Artpehhhhh~”

She had been beyond brave. She have been frighteningly decisive in her actions, but

unlike before, her eyes were full of unshed tears now.

“Yes, yes. You did very well.”

He knew her heart would be in tumult right now. Artpe let out a bitter laugh as he hugged her. She was crying, because she was afraid of her own self more so than anyone. It felt as if he could feel her feelings vividly through the hands holding her.

Once, he had been like her. His personality was unbecoming of a Demon. He had despaired, as he had hated himself more so than anyone over the years.

“Should I really be doing things like this? It feels like I did something very wrong.”

“No, you did well. Even if you were in the wrong, there will never come a day when you will realize that fact. That is why you don’t have to worry too much about it.”

“Artpe.....”

Artpe used a messed up oxymoron to console her as he stroked her head. The people, who had been watching the fight, was taken aback. Their round eyes were full of shock. They looked like they wanted to ask what kind of third rate skit this was.

There was an armored woman holding a steel sword amongst the group. She spoke to Artpe as she expressed a bit of wariness towards him.

“Thank you very much for helping us. However, it would be best if you don’t get involved with us...”

“Yes. All right.”

“What!?”

She hadn’t even started giving him a proper explanation! The woman was taken aback. As expected of the owner of the Read All Creation ability, he was the best in the world at reading a situation. Artpe continued to stroke the head of the sniffing Maetel as he spoke to the woman.

“We saw nothing here. I don’t care about what happened here. We were passing by, and we just killed couple monsters. That should be fine, right?”

“What?”

The woman was surprised when he gave her the exact answer she had wanted to hear. Artpe snorted when he saw this, then he turned around.

“Let’s go, Maetel.”

“Is it really alright to just leave like this, Artpe? We can just go? ”

“We did as you wished by helping them, and this is the result. They don’t want us to get involved with them. Then our business with them is at an end. We can go do what we want to do.”

“.....sniff. All right.”

Maetel had accepted his answer, so he was about to head back to the warm fire. He was consoling Maetel as he walked away when it occurred.

Someone yelled towards them from the other party.

“Stop!”

It was the voice of a young man. Artpe didn’t stop.

“I told you to stop! This is the order of the crown prince!”

“You hid like a mouse during the fight, so I thought you were some poor mute. I see now that you are quite loud.”

“Kook...!”

The crown prince shut his mouth at Artpe’s sharp retort.

At times, truth was more cruel than anything else. Moreover, he had just seen a girl that was the same age as him fight, and he couldn’t hold a candle against her. This was why his pride was deeply hurt.

“Y... you are being rude! As he had revealed, he is the next in line to ascend to the throne of the Diaz Kingdom.....”

“Didn’t I say I saw nothing? Are you guys idiots?”

“Oohk.....”

He could tolerate foolish behaviors only up to a certain point. He had been trying to part ways with them as he pretended he didn’t know what was going on, yet they revealed themselves anyways. They even tried to use an authority they no longer possessed in an attempt to stop Artpe and Maetel!

Artpe let out a sigh as he started walking once again...

“Help me!”

“Your highness!”

“The kingdom is in turmoil, because of the rebels! I must go back to to the place someday, and I must get my revenge for my father the king. I have to regain my throne. If I want to do so, I need strong people like you!”

The boy was pretty straightforward, and he showed some promise!? Still, this didn’t mean Artpe had stopped walking.

“You should go look for help somewhere else. Let’s go, Maetel.”

“Yes. I hate the palace!”

She firmly believed that the palace had tasteless food. This was why the palace was a place where she would never get close to! Maetel grabbed the sleeve of Artpe’s robe, and she obediently followed behind him.

“W... wait a moment!”

The boy finally made his appearance as he pushed past his protectors! He looked to be of similar age as Artpe and Maetel. He was a strikingly good-looking boy.

He yelled loudly towards Artpe and Maetel. He stared at Maetel, who had displayed overwhelming martial prowess.

“If you guys are the subjects of this land, you should help the one that would become the ruler of this land in the future...! I do not lie. I will give both of you a big reward in

the future! I swear it!"

He wanted to escape this pattern of events. Artpe let out a sigh. He turned around as he gave an answer.

"Then give me half of the world."

"Mmm!? T... that is..."

At Artpe's out of the blue request, the crown prince's eyes narrowed. He was only a crown prince of a kingdom, and he was on the run. How could he offer half of the world!

Artpe clicked his tongue...

"At a minimum, the Demon King offers this deal to the hero. You should come back after reading a book called, 'How to Propose an Offer that Can't be Turned Down.'"

This was a very sweet opportunity. However, Maetel just assumed Artpe didn't want to get involved in something annoying. She was somewhat correct, but it wasn't the whole truth. Artpe didn't have that bad of a personality.

Except...

'How could I forget about him? That bastard was originally the crown prince of the Diaz Kingdom.....'

In his past life, he had been the enemy of the hero. The hero's heart was too soft, so she had been unable to kill Artpe. This was why the thief ruthlessly plunged his dagger into Artpe's heart to deal the killing blow.

"Why are you refusing to even hear me out! If you succeed in this task, I said I would give you a very generous reward! Moreover, the one with the ability is the girl, so why do you keep answering for her!"

The crown prince was shouting at Artpe with all his might. Artpe saw the face of the thief superimpose over the face of this boy.

"Ah, I just don't want to do it. I don't like you! I'm not doing it!"

“Why not!”

[Silpennon Le Diaz]

[Crown Prince]

[Level - 7]

[Steal Lv1]

[Silent Steps Lv2]

Yes, this bastard was that bastard.

A crown prince of a country grew up to be a thief.

Chapter 24

Yesterday's Enemy (3)

In his past life, the hero had been born within the Diaz Kingdom. When the hero turned 12 years old, she was dragged straight into the palace. This was the biggest mistake that had occurred in the past hero's life.

The palace followed a Hero Support Manual that was created several hundred years ago. While she was reared with the utmost care, the hero's first party member was added during this time. He was none other than this country's crown prince Silpennon Le Diaz. He was a thief.

'Of course, it isn't my business as to why Silpennon had turned down his seat as the crown prince to join the hero's party..... No, I get it now.'

It was true that Silpennon was directing his words towards Artpe, but his eyes remained planted on Maetel. His cheeks were red. It seemed he had fallen for her on first sight.

It was understandable. In her past life, Maetel could have easily ruined couple kingdoms with her beauty. She was only thirteen years old right now, but her budding beauty could be seen even now. This was why it wasn't far-fetched to think that the crown prince had fallen for her.

Still, Silpennon had witnessed Maetel shed blood with his two eyes. It was a bit baffling that he was able to show such pure ardor towards her.

"I don't want your answer. I want to hear it from the girl!"

Silpennon browbeat Artpe as he turned his intense gaze towards Maetel. Artpe shrugged his shoulders, and he lightly tapped Maetel's shoulder.

".....if you put it that way, I have no choice. You do whatever you want, Maetel."

"Huh?"

Maetel's tears hadn't stopped yet, but she was released from Artpe's embrace. She faced the crown prince. The crown prince looked on with pity when he saw her puffy eyes.

"You poor thing..... You are a child with a very tender heart. However, you don't have to be worried. The people you killed right now are rebels. They are traitors to this country, so you don't have to be wounded by their deaths....."

"I hate the palace! I'm not going!"

Silpennon's attempt at consoling her failed miserably. Maetel cut him off as she rejected him. She returned to the arms of Artpe. She was as resolute as Artpe.

"What the....."

Silpennon was turned down in no uncertain term, so he froze in place. One of the knights protecting Silpennon inadvertently started breaking out in laughter. The other knights reigned him in.

Silpennon came to his senses under the impetus of the laughter. He had never been turned down so firmly in his life. His pride took a big hit, and he started talking incoherently.

"W... why not... I promise to give you a lot of things! If you help me, I... Y... yes. What is your name? Which family are you from? If you have to travel around with such a terrible servant, it seems to indicate that you are unfortunately not from a suitable family. However, when we return to the palace, I'll use all the power at my disposal to elevate you to a suitable position..."

".....did you just insult Artpe right now?"

She didn't like something Silpennon had said. Maetel remained in Artpe's embrace, but she extracted her face to glare at Silpennon. Silpennon realized he had stepped on a mine, so his face turned pale.

"Ah. I... I didn't mean it like that..."

"I just told you! Artpe isn't terrible, and he isn't my servant!"

"H... he isn't your servant!?"

“You are really terrible!”

It really was a sight that couldn't be seen without shedding some tears. It seemed Artpe wasn't the only one having such thoughts. The female knight, who had initiated a conversation with Artpe, carefully spoke to Silpennon.

“Your highness. Unfortunately, we might have to give up on the idea of them helping us. They have already saved your highness' life once. You should be thankful, yet you are trying to detain them against their will. This isn't unbecoming of your station, your highness. You possess the great bloodline of Diaz.”

“Koo-oohk... So I have no choice, but to let the girl go!”

“Your highness.....”

They were playing their parts well. They continued to act as if they were still in charge of a kingdom. If so, they could do as they wished by themselves.

“She doesn't want to do it. Are we done here? We're going.”

“Hmmp!”

Artpe let out a sigh as he turned away from them. As if she was worried about being left behind, she matched his footsteps. At that moment, she was very cute.

However...

“Please stop.....”

Silpennon called after them again. His voice drooped like a wet rag. Artpe didn't hide his annoyance as he turned around. However, his eyes opened slightly wider when he saw what was in Silpennon's hand.

“Please take this.”

“What the...”

It was Artpe's turn to be surprised like an idiot.

Silpennon had held up a large jewel that was emitting a purple light from all its

surface. Anyone, who knew the identity of the precious gemstone, would have reacted in a similar fashion. Artpe's Read All Creation ability didn't let him down. It immediately displayed the item's info.

[Demite's Gemstone]

[Magician]

[It is part of the Limite group, which is considered to be the one of the highest ranked ingredients for magic items. It is incredibly high in purity, and as time passed, it gained a Class of its own. It is a legendary gem that only appears a handful of times in either the human world or the demon world.

It hadn't been refined yet, so the gemstone's enormous power is still hidden. However, once it is refined, it will increase one's Mana by a vast amount, and it would also develop random additional abilities. It will also develop a will of its own, so it will have the ability to help the owner finish one's spell. However, it is so hard that it is almost impossible to refine it. This is the only flaw to the item.]

"This is probably worth more than his entire kingdom!?"

He had run across an unexpected item at a place where he had never expected to find it. This was why Artpe almost became lost in himself. Silpennon spoke calmly in front of Artpe.

"Since I've incurred a debt to you, it is up to me to express my thanks. I am being chased, but I cannot neglect my duty. Take this, youth. I don't know what it is, but it has been kept in our kingdom's treasury for a very long time. I'm sure it is a precious gemstone. You should sell this, so your master... No. I want you to use it to help the girl acquire equipment that would be of help to her."

"Do you really know what this is..."

No, if he knew, he wouldn't have given it to Artpe no matter how great of a help they were to him. Artpe cleanly swallowed the shout of joy that was about to exit his mouth. He took the purple colored gemstone. In such a situation, it was one's duty to be quiet, and just take the item!

"Hmm. As expected of the crown prince, you've received a fantastic upbringing. Thank you."

“Is that perhaps a compliment, Artpe!?”

The other knights were taken aback when they saw Silpennon hand over the Demite Gemstone. It seemed all the other knights weren't like the female knight, who convinced Silpennon to do the right thing. It seemed they didn't put much importance in duty and honor.

“Your highness, we took that before we ran away from the palace. I don't think you should give away such a precious treasure.....”

“It is too excessive. I can tell at a glance that they aren't highborn. We can't give our treasure just because they aided us with the sword once...”

“His highness has made his decision, so you should all shut up.”

Everyone shut their mouth when the female knight gave a fiery order. She was level 118. Since she had the highest level amongst the knights, he had wondered if she was the leader. He had guessed right.

Well, even if she was the leader, they were... Artpe shrugged his shoulders, and he put away the Demite's Gemstone into the Dimensional Pouch.

The knights kept looking back at Artpe as if Silpennon's actions had left much to be desired. The female knight spoke in praise about the crown prince's upbringing. Silpennon tried to act cool on the outside, but the crown prince couldn't let go of the lingering attachment he had towards Maetel.

“Mmm.....”

Artpe hesitated as he looked at them.

He didn't like Silpennon, but this sentiment came from the fact that Silpennon had delivered the killing blow in his past life. However, the one in front of him showed some promise.

No, if he thought about it, Silpennon had carried out the dirty deed instead of the hero. He wasn't really that bad of a guy.

Every time he saw Silpennon he remembered the calm face of the bastard, who stuck a dagger into his heart in his past life. It annoyed him, but when he saw the Demite's

Gemstone in his hand, any trauma he would have felt evaporated in moments.

‘All right. It feel like a waste to just send them off like this.’

This was why he decided to give Silpennon a bonus.

“Could you wait a little bit?”

“What? Are you perhaps going to help us.....”

“Do you have any paper?”

“Paper?”

The female knight tilted her head in confusion. She took out a piece of parchment from within her clothes. She handed it over to Artpe.

“All right.....”

He opened up the parchment, and he emitted a very small amount of Mana at the tip of his finger. Small smoke started to rise up as he wrote his letter. It was a trick that can be performed only by those adept at controlling Mana. Everyone except Maetel flinched when they saw this.

“As expected, this youth isn’t normal either, your highness...”

“If he is her assistant... At the very least, he should have that much skill if he wants to travel with her. He’s a magician.”

“Well, I’m done writing. Also...”

Artpe took out an envelope from his Dimensional Pouch. It contained a strange green powder. He folded the note, and he handed it to the female knight with the envelope containing the green powder. He gave her a light wink.

“It is only for your eyes.”

“W... what.....”

The female knight’s face turned red. Silpennon and the knights focused their gazes on

her. The female knight was flustered, but she quickly hid the items.

“A... are you trying to make fun of an adult!”

“I was sincere. It is only for your eyes.”

“Koohk.....”

Artpe was well aware of the fact that his appearance was quite pleasing. If not, a big fish like the leader of the thieves’ army Etna Carlyfate Mirecard wouldn’t have clung to him.

Of course, love didn’t develop just based on a person’s appearance. However, one’s appearance was the first impression one could give, and it was undeniable that it had an immense effect on various parts of the love that develops.

Silpennon was stunned as he looked up at her face.

“Leseti... Really?”

“Ah. No way, your highness! He’s just a young lad!”

“However, your face turned red.”

“It isn’t like that! Anyways, I have to check if the note and the powder is safe. I’ll keep it in my possession until then!”

“We’ll be leaving now. I hope you live long enough for us to meet again.”

Artpe chortled as he turned away. He had done all he could for them, so it was up to them now. The night was getting deep, so they should return to their own campfire to get ready for camping outside...

“Artpe.....”

Maetel’s eyes were murky like the eyes of a dead fish. She asked a question with a voice that was colder than winds blowing within the icy depths of hell.

“Does Artpe perhaps like old women...?”

“No. Nope. I promise you that isn’t the case.”

She had also fallen for the ruse!

Artpe let out a sigh as he flicked her forehead. He dragged her towards the campfire.

On the other side, the crown prince’s party stood in place for a moment. Everyone was looking towards one person. When the female knight became the focus of their attention, Leseti was flustered. She kept waving her arms.

“I... it isn’t like that! It isn’t, your highness! Anyways, we should ready our camp. Since we don’t know how long our pursuers will follow us, we can’t rest long.....”

“Yes, we should rest, and you should read the letter.”

“It is probably nothing!”

Leseti erased the traces of battle, and she led the crown prince’s party towards a suitable campsite. She ordered the knights to make a shelter, so Silpennon could rest first. When no one was looking, she secretly took out Artpe’s letter.

“That impertinent brat.....”

It seemed he had good eyes to be able to recognize a beauty like her. Leseti let out a self-satisfied smile as she lit a candle. His penmanship was so elegant that it was hard to believe a young man had written it. However, the letter was stuck to her eyes starting from the first word.

[All the other knights are traitors. It is up to you to protect the crown prince before he gets killed or kidnapped by them. They were probably waiting the right time to steal the jewel from the crown prince, but he gave it to me. They won’t hesitate anymore. Ah. I’ve enclosed a poison within the folded envelope. You should use it. This makes us even.]

.....the content of the letter had gone in a completely different direction than what Leseti had expected. The letter still made her heart pound.

Chapter 25

Yesterday's Enemy (4)

The fire made by Artpe was very warm. The two of them caught fishes from the ravine, and they cooked it over the fire. They used 3 silver worth of salt. Maetel hadn't had any fish for over a year, so she was surprised by the sudden and unexpected taste.

"Heeng. This is so tasty....."

"If you eat when you are hungry, everything tastes great."

There were still traces of tear left near Maetel's eyes. Still, she was briskly eating the fishes. She was even eating the bones. He couldn't help but smile. He started to eat his own portion of fishes as he spoke.

"You have worked hard, Maetel. It is true that the Dungeon was very hard, but as a result, we were able to significantly decrease our growth period. We'll be able to move with a little bit more time to spare. No, even if you don't like it, we'll move at a more leisurely pace. I'm really tired and exhausted."

"Artpe....."

"Say it."

Maetel was still unable to calm her heart. She sniffed as she asked him a question.

"Are you really sure that you don't like older women?"

"....."

Was she still worried about that!?

He was dumbfounded. He smirked as he shook his head from side to side.

"Didn't I tell you earlier? I gave her a little bit of a warning as recompense for the gem we received."

“Are you really sure?”

“I’m really sure.”

“.....yes, I’ll believe you.”

It seemed her worry about Artpe looking at other women overshadowed her psychological uneasiness at killing humans. It seemed Artpe wouldn’t have to worry too much about her.

Artpe let out a sigh of relief, and he was about to clear away the trash. However, at that moment, Maetel spoke as if she just had an idea.

“I want to sleep next to Artpe.”

“You aren’t a child anymore.”

“I want to sleep with you. You said you’ll grant me any wish I want.”

Maetel’s voice was shaking slightly. When he heard it, Artpe realized he was under a misconception.

She wasn’t being unnecessarily clingy towards Artpe. Her mental state was uneasy. Moreover, she was still worried about the thought of Artpe leaving her.

“.....all right. I did say that I’ll grant you a wish, so it can’t be helped.”

“Ya-ho!”

He took out a bedroll(5 silvers). It was a bit cramped for two people, but he was prepared to go through with it tonight.

He gathered some leaves on the ground, and he placed a cloth over it. Then he placed the bedroll on top before he lie within it. As if she was worried about Artpe going back on his words, she quickly got in. She had a satisfied expression on her face as she closed her eyes.

“Good night, Artpe.”

“It’s cramped and uncomfortable in here, so how can we sleep well... She is already

asleep.”

“Ssss…….”

When Maetel was held by Artpe, it seemed all her worries were let go. She was breathing easily as she quickly fell into sleep. Artpe was dumbfounded by the sight, but in the end, he let out a bitter laugh as he moved to put her in a more comfortable position.

‘It feels like I’m raising a kid.’

In truth, it may not be too far from the truth. Maetel didn’t remember her past life, so she was just a young 13 year old girl. If Artpe added in his past life, he had lived for couple hundred years. He was a demon that was turned into a hero. Sometimes, he felt the disparity between the two lives keenly, and in those moments, he had a hard time breathing.

Still, Artpe liked being with Maetel. It was strange, but at times, he felt pleased and full.

It wasn’t just because she was a talent, who could free Artpe by defeating the Demon King. At this point, Artpe had no choice but to accept the fact. Maetel was fairly... She was quite dear to him.

It was unfortunate that the innocent child was changing. She was being stained by his presence. However, he was thankful that this small child cherished him, and she wanted him around.

It was as if he had committed a sin. It felt as if he was slowly being buried under a soft marsh. It was as if he was melting away. He was afraid to struggle... It was that sweet.

‘Still, I shouldn’t pay too much attention to it. I can be complacent after we kill the Demon King... ’

Yes, he had things to do right now.

Artpe was careful not to wake Maetel. He carefully snuck his hand out of the bedroll, and he activated his magic. The Hero’s Unique Spell called Mana String was activated in no time.

“Kook!?”

“We were found.....!”

The five strands of Mana Strings extended out into the surrounding. The Mana Strings let out a black light as they danced in the air. Red lines of blood bloomed underneath the dark night sky like flowers. Accompanying dull thudding sounds, human body parts started to fall to the ground.

“How!”

They had been sure that they had succeeded in their stealth mission. They paid for this belief with their lives. Of course, there were still a lot of them left. Artpe would extract a price from all of them.

Artpe looked at them with cool eyes, and he spoke with a voice that was colder than a block of ice.

“She’s sleeping. Be quiet, so she doesn’t wake up.”

“Are you to playing games with... kahk!”

Artpe clicked his tongue as he watched the men emerge from the darkness. He moved his fingers. The Mana Strings moved according to his will. They moved like whips with sentience, and they split through the air. The lives of two to three people were killed in a flash.

“He is stronger than the girl...!”

“It seems you guys are incapable of learning. Don’t you guys realize that you guys are dying in the order of who opened their mouth first?”

Artpe’s purple eyes let out a radiant light within the darkness. It was as if his eyes could pierce through all lies. His eyes only contained the truth. The party of men had tried a surprise attack relying on the darkness. His eyes was like the deliverer of death for these men.

“W... we can’t win.”

“The one that is terrifying is actually him... Kahk!”

‘Mana String. The experience I picked up struggling as a weakling was mixed with the Hero’s power to become a Unique spell...’

It wasn’t a proper spell. The Mana Threads was something he developed during the rough patches of his life as a demon. In the beginning , the Mana String was an unwelcome development for him.

However, he was able to quietly take care of this problem thanks to this spell. He was able to let Maetel sleep peacefully. This single reason was good enough for him to value this magic.

“We erred in assessing their capability.....”

“Where are you running away?”

Mana String was able to impart overwhelming force using Mana, but it consumed a lot of Mana. This was why it wasn’t a weapon that could be used freely in a battle situation.

This was why Artpe used all the information coming in through his eyes to find the most efficient trajectories. He moved his fingers according to the calculations he had made.

The men tried everything to stop it, but their weapons and feet were slower than the Mana String, which had no weight.

“Wait a moment. If you cooperate with us, you will have a place in the newly created kingdom.....”

“Good bye.”

The five strands of Mana Strings gathered at a single location. The last remaining man was still struggling to live. He died as he was cut into several slabs of meat. His face was full of resentment. Artpe let out a bitter laugh when he saw it.

‘From your perspective, your side was probably in the absolute right. In your next life, I hope you will be able to live a life as a farmer where you won’t have to kill or be killed. I will pray for you all.’

Artpe retracted the Mana Strings, and he checked Maetel, who was snuggled up

against him. Her breathing was even. She was still asleep.

‘That wasn’t too bad.’

However, it seemed the disturbance wasn’t at an end. From not too far away, the main guests were coming towards them.

“We were discovered, captain! If you are done retrieving the gem, you should help... What!?”

From the beginning, Artpe hadn’t bothered hiding his location. He didn’t have any particular difficulty in dispatching the first group that had ambushed him, and it would be the same for those that had followed behind them.

“What the hell is.....”

“Impossible.....!?”

He had wondered about the identity of the second group, who was drawn towards them like moths. It was none other than the knights that had accompanied the crown prince Silpennon. There were some amongst them that was suffering from serious wounds. Some amongst them had bloated face as if they were suffering under the effects of poison.

Still, they were better off than the men that were killed here. They had come here to ask for help, so they hadn’t expected to witness the death of their other party. They were extremely surprised.

“Y... you bastard!?”

Artpe was wide awake, while Maetel was asleep. It wasn’t too difficult to determine, who was the culprit.

“You guys are too noisy.”

Artpe only brought out a single strand of Mana String to confront their anger. These men were like scraps compared to the men that had ambushed Artpe’s party. They were maggots, who ran away, because they couldn’t handle a single level 118 knight.

“Be quiet. Forever.”

“Kuhk.....!”

The Mana String cut through the air. Four knights had survived, and they had run away towards this direction. He took care of them in six seconds. Afterwards, a woman ran into the clearing. She had great timing.

“You bastards! You dare to call yourselves knights, who protect the royal family... Mmmm!?”

“Shhh.”

Artpe was still within the bedroll, and he was glaring at the female knight Leseti with narrowed eyes. Leseti saw the numerous corpses strewn around the clearing, so she closed her mouth.

She was pretty good on the uptake, so she was able to easily identify, who was behind the slaughter.

‘I had a hunch that he wasn’t normal, but I never expected him to be such an overwhelming force. Who is this young man... Mmm?’

She was so scared that she was unable to let out even a squeak under Artpe’s murderous gaze. She silently went over the situation when she suddenly had an epiphany.

There was an incident near here only a year ago. Two heroes had been born in a country village. When they disappeared, the whole kingdom had been in an uproar!

Two youths.....

They were incomprehensibly strong compared to their ages.

Black hair and blonde hair...

“Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!?”

“Mmmm, Artpe.....?”

“Ah.”

Leseti couldn't hold back her exclamation of surprise. Maetel opened her eyes. Leseti belatedly realized she had made a mistake. Artpe sharply raised a finger, and Leseti shut her eyes when she saw it.

A brief amount of time had passed.

"Are you ok, Artpe?"

"I wasn't hurt at all, so you don't have to touch me constantly. I'll clean this up, so you should keep your eyes close."

"I'm not going to close my eyes. I'm all right now. I'll be fine since Artpe is here."

"You don't look fine... All right. You do whatever you want."

"Yes!"

If she hadn't seen the corpses everywhere around her, she would have been able to continue her sleep. However, once she found about about them, sleep wasn't an option. The two heroes got up from their sleeping place, and they put away the bedroll. They started working on cleaning up the corpses strewn about their surrounding.

Artpe took all of the equipment that was useful. He also took all the silver coins they possessed. Maetel gathered the corpses he was done 'looting.'

"Artpe, why do we have to kill other people?"

"It is the same reason as to why we killed the monsters. We all have something we want from each other. Everything else is just an excuse. The plethora of excuses given for harming living beings are just embellishments."

"I see..... The act of living is very hard in itself."

"The important part is to realize that we have to live within such a world. You can respect the lives of other people, but when there is a collision, you have carry through to enforce your way of life."

"Yes. All right."

Thirteen year old brats were talking about philosophical bullshit as they calmly

cleared away the corpses. What was she supposed to say to them? Should she disagree with their views? Should she tell them to go read more books?

Of course, Leseti was banned from speaking, so she didn't say anything. She continued to raise her two hands as she sat on her knees. This was a punishment devised by Artpe.

"That it. Did you gather all of them Maetel?"

"Yes!"

"All right."

After Artpe threw all the corpses into the fire, he turned to look at Leseti. She still had her arms up as she carried out the order she was given. Artpe smirked as he spoke.

"Your punishment is at an end. You should go back to the crown prince. As you probably realize by now, no one will side with you even if you head back towards the palace. The two of you should go to a remote village. You should live a quiet life, while tending to cows."

"Koohk....."

Leseti couldn't give a proper retort. She just groaned.

Yes, the only thing going for the crown prince was that he was the legitimate heir. However, in regards to all other issues, the rebels held the upper hand. No one would side with them. That was the miserable truth.

"Hey"

At that moment, a young man pushed past the brush, and he gave a reply instead of Leseti.

"Do you know why there was a rebellion against the Diaz family?"

It was the red haired crown prince Silpennon. Of course, Artpe had already sensed him getting close. This was why he wasn't surprised as he gave his reply.

"Did they perhaps attack the king on the fact that he wasn't able to properly take care

of the heroes?”

“You are correct. Of course, I don’t plan on putting the blame on you guys. That incident was merely the trigger. My uncle... The duke was a wild beast, who had been waiting for an opportunity to tear into the king. If it wasn’t the escape of the heroes, he would have found another reason to start a rebellion”

Silpennon had already come to the same conclusion as Leseti that Artpe and Maetel were heroes. Still, his face remained aloof. It was said that a man grows through hardship. His gaze remained on Artpe instead of Maetel.

“You are right. Even if I recklessly went back to the palace, there isn’t much that I could do. I’m just a brat that was lucky enough to be born as the crown prince. If I act rashly, my head would be severed. It would be mounted next to the king’s head.”

“Your highness.....!”

“This is why I have to go with you guys.”

“What?”

His words were very unexpected. However, Silpennon continued to speak with a sincere voice.

“The duke rebelled using the fact that my father had lost track of the heroes. The duke used that reason to gain the throne. Now he will use all available resources to find the heroes in an attempt to solidify his reign.”

“That’ll seems likely.”

“So what would happen if I’m already in the party of the heroes?”

What was this bastard talking about?

When Artpe glared at Silpennon, he provided an explanation.

“The new king would be unable to find the heroes, yet I would be in the party of the heroes. I would be helping the the heroes. In the end, we would succeed in killing the Demon King! At that time, who would the people and the nobles want on the throne! They would want me, who gained the title of hero!”

“Oh oh. It is a very risky and wild plan! Still, it isn’t too bad.”

“Isn’t it!?”

It was a good idea considering it was devised by a kid. This stupid kingdom put importance on titles compared to any other place in the world. This plan sounded like it could actually work!

Artpe nodded his head as if there was merit to his plan. Silpennon was excited by this fact, so he started shouting his words.

“That is why you guys should team up with me! From this moment on, I’ll throw away my rank as the crown prince. I’ll help you guys defeat the Demon King. I’ll become a key player within the hero’s party!”

“Hold your horses. There is a very big flaw within your plan that can’t be ignored.”

Artpe spoke coldly.

“You are too weak. You won’t be of any help to us. I’ll be blunt. You’ll be a burden, so get lost.”

“Koo-huhk!”

The astute comment was a critical hit! The crown prince had no way of refuting that fact! The current hero’s words had a multiplier effect!

Chapter 26

Yesterday's Enemy (5)

The sun brightened the morning. Artpe caught several fishes from the ravine, and he used the Mana String to clean them. This magic wasn't meant to be used this way, but he didn't care. He was killing two birds with one stone by leveling up his Spell Level.

Maybe.

"Wow. Artpe's hand movements are exquisite."

"I'm not trying to boast, but I have a knack for useless talents."

"Leseti, are all magicians able to use such an odd spell?"

"This is the first time I've seen such a spell. It seems he is more special since he is a hero."

Silpennon and Leseti was also watching this sight.

If spoken bluntly, they had lost their positions and their escort guards. They were beggars now. Artpe felt a little bit bad for just sending them away, so he decided to send them off after a meal.

"So you guys didn't bring any foods you can eat?"

"We did bring a lot of money. Our kingdom specializes in manufacturing Dimensional Pouches."

"I'm sure you know this, but I'll say it just in case. Don't spend large sums of money in any old place."

"Why not?"

"Hah."

Artpe looked away from Silpennon. He looked at Leseti with sympathy in his eyes. He could clearly see the difficulty she would have to endure in the future.

“.....hoong.”

“Eh-eet.”

However, Leseti avoided his gaze as her cheeks reddened.

In her stead, Maetel pinched Artpe’s thigh.

“Huh?”

What the hell? Why were their reactions switched?

Artpe was bewildered as he rubbed at his thigh. At that moment, the crown prince added a supplementary explanation.

“For the past 20 years of her life, Leseti only focused on self-training and protecting me. She is a poor woman, who has yet to date a man. Even if you are young, she is accepting you in that fashion, because she is very thirsty.”

“Your highness, it has been an honor to be able to serve you until now. Please be happy in your future endeavors.”

“Why are you unsheathing your sword! I always trusted you to be by my side!”

“You revealed the reason why!”

“You aren’t using honorifics!?”

Such a simple method was able to eliminate her sense of loyalty. He had a better idea now on why the Diaz Kingdom were overrun by the rebels.

He finished cleaning the fishes.

Artpe kept a small steel pot alongside his money inside the Dimensional Pouch. Maetel brought over edible plants, and he put in spices(50 bronze) he bought from the merchant. When the water came to a boil, he put the fishes in. Soon, a very pleasant smell started to emanate from it.

“It seems you are very experienced at doing all of this.”

“If you fight and live in the mountains and fields, this type of skills becomes second nature to you.”

The four people ate the finished fish soup. The rations supplemented the meal. The food was eaten in a blink of an eye. Maetel always ate whatever Artpe made as if it was delicious. He could give her a ball of dirt, and she would say it was delicious. However, he had thought Silpennon would have a picky palate, since he was the crown prince. He ate it without complaining, and he even gave Artpe a compliment.

“Thank you. I enjoyed it very much.”

“How should I say this? You are so polite that it is annoying.”

“Mmm. His competency for household chores are great...”

He decided not to ask Leseti about what she was checking. Artpe finished washing the dishes. He stood up after he put away the pot into the Dimensional Pouch.

“Let’s go our own way from here on out.”

“Is there any way we can go with you guys? I guess this is to be expected. My ability is pitiful compared to you guys.....”

Silpennon was in low spirits. He lowered his head as he mumbled those words. This was the first time he had escaped the mantle of his position as the crown prince. It was at this moment that he realized how powerless he was for the first time in his life. His direction in life going forward would be determined on how he remedied that fact.

Artpe had a bitter expression on his face, and he asked Silpennon a question as if he was asking it in passing.

“So what do you plan on doing from here on out?”

“I planned on finding the heroes. Then I wanted to achieve the merit of defeating the Demon King. However, that plan fell into pieces, so I don’t know what..... I can’t go back to the castle. In truth, I’m at a dead end.”

“Leseti, do you have any other plans?”

“He is an annoying human being, but he is my lord. I will protect him until I’m able to. That is it.”

“Basically, you don’t have any other plans.”

“Koohk.”

He had expected her to be a little bit smarter than Silpennon, but it seemed Leseti also didn’t know much about the world.

If he let them go like this, they would die somewhere without anyone knowing about it. He could only see a miserable death for them in the future.

“.....ssp. I guess it can’t be helped. ”

Artpe let out a sigh as he gave them a proposal.

“Let’s form a temporary party.”

“Are you... letting us into your party!?”

Silpennon’s eyes shone, and even Leseti had a healthy glow when she heard the news. Maetel looked as if she was unsatisfied with something.

“I like being with Artpe. Just the two of us...”

“This is temporary. We’ll do this until we clear one Dungeon. If I let this guy leave, he’ll suffer a rough fate. I’ll give him some basic lessons. I’ll let him become indebted to me, and I’m sure he’ll bring something back to me in the future.”

“Are you supposed to say that in front of the person you are talking about?”

Silpennon spoke as he was dumbfounded, but his face remained bright. He now knew that Artpe cared about them.

When he saw Artpe ruthlessly kill the knights, he had doubts as to whether he was a hero. As expected, he was good at a fundamental level!

Of course, Artpe’s intention was entirely different from what Silpennon had attributed to him.

‘Even if he was the crown prince, they don’t let anyone join the hero’s party. One has to be excellent and skilled at a very basic level. That is why the party members are able to stick around the hero without dying.’

The crown prince had the talent to become a thief. He was very remarkable.

If he was trained properly, he’ll be able to gain fame within the kingdom within couple years. No, his name would spread throughout the continent. Of course, in his past life, Silpennon was locked away inside the palace for five years alongside Maetel, and the rest was history.

‘If I expend a little bit of my time here, I can create a foundation he can build on. I would be making a powerful card that I can use later against the Demon King’s army. Moreover, he seems to have a personality of wanting to repay his debts. In light of that fact, there isn’t much downside in doing this.’

If one received a favor, it had to be paid back.

It was a reasonable sentiment. It was also true that it was hard to make good on such sentiments. However, the crown prince in front of him might have that great quality where he would keep true to his duties.

“I have a question.”

Silpennon hadn’t opened his mouth. It was Leseti.

“You just said a Dungeon. You speak so lightly about it... Do you realize it is very hard to find a Dungeon? At this moment, countless adventurers are looking a Dungeon in an attempt to strike it rich. They roam the land, but they are barely able to find one after they fruitlessly search for several years. Even if they do find one, they just suffer a dog’s death.”

“I’m already well aware of that fact.”

“If we want to clear a decent Dungeon, we’ll have to stay together for couple years. Is this a roundabout way of accepting us into your party?”

Maybe Leseti was hoping her words were true. She had come here based on the idea that she had to save the crown prince. However, she wasn’t talented at anything except fighting and protecting someone.

He was young, yet he had ridiculous amount of power. Moreover, he was talented in many facets. If they were able to join Artpe's party, she would be able to just focus on fighting and guarding the crown prince.

On top of that, if the crown prince was able to grow up splendidly and play a support role in defeating the Demon King, he would be able to return triumphantly as the scion of the Diaz family.

"Well, aren't I right?"

She was 20 years old, but from Artpe's perspective, she still looked like a brat to him. She was trying hard to appear as if she was calm. However, there was a catch and a slight tremor in her voice that betrayed the desperation she was feeling. Artpe let out a laugh.

"You'll see."

Two days had passed. The party stood in front of an old tree that was rotting away.

What was hiding there?

It was none other than an entrance to the Dungeon. Artpe merely extended his Mana, and the hollow portion of the tree expanded. It was readied itself to accept the adventurers.

"No way....."

"This is impossible!"

Leseti had an agitated expression on her face. Silpennon was shocked as he turned to look at Artpe.

"How were you able to find it so quickly.....?"

"Accidents and events have a way of finding heroes even if they stay put, yet we are actively searching for a Dungeon right now. Of course, one or two Dungeons would show up."

"Heroes are truly amazing!"

“That’s right. Artpe is truly amazing!”

This is why it is convenient to have idiots around!

“The magical energy I sense isn’t high or dense. The monsters inside will be of the common variety. Let’s go.”

It wasn’t as if this was an insignificant Dungeon. However, it couldn’t be disputed that it was a lousy Dungeon crawling with low level Slimes. Even if it was a lousy Dungeon, it was a very large one. This was why no adventurer was able to completely conquer this Dungeon in his past life! This was true even at the time of his death!

“Here. You should arm yourself with this.”

“Ooh-mmmmm.”

Artpe tossed a crappy equipment that Silpennon could arm himself with. Silpennon took the dagger, and he spoke with an uncertain voice.

“Do... do you think I can do this?”

“Who wanted an active role inside the hero’s party?”

“.....I did.”

At Artpe’s light provocation, Silpennon answered back with a firm voice. He nodded his head several times as if he was making a resolve. He gripped the dagger so hard that veins started to pop out on the back of his hand.

“All right. Since the hero plans on guiding me, I can’t turn that opportunity down. I’ll do it.”

“You are no longer in the position of being the crown prince. From now on, I want you to think about what position you want, and what kind of fighting style you want to fight with. You should battle with those points in your mind.”

“Understood.”

He started fidgeting with the short sword in one hand. He asked a question. It seemed his other hand was feeling empty.

“Do you have another one that is similar to this?”

“Hmmm.”

The act of using weapons with both hands sounded easy, but it wasn't something he would recommend..... Well, it would be helpful if he experienced this fact. At his request, Artpe took out another short sword.

“All right. The balance finally feels right. In truth, when I was bored within the palace, I used to busy my hands like this.”

“It must have been great. It seem being the crown prince was a job of leisure.”

Silpennon was finally satisfied after he alternately swung his daggers in each hand. At that moment, his information was updated.

[Silpennon Le Diaz]

[Level : 7]

[Dual Wielding Lv1]

“Ah.”

That's right. If seen in certain light, this guy would be considered to be a genius. Artpe was dumbfounded as he let out a bitter laugh.

Anyways, Silpennon was now ready for battle.

Leseti looked a bit disappointed.

Maetel had spend a year in a Dungeon, yet it seemed she was eager to go into another one. She was excited.

“We are doing this Dungeon exploration to grow Silpennon's ability. If possible, we should stay out of his way. Even if there are traps, we won't be telling you about it, so you should firm your resolve. Is that clear?”

“...all right.”

Silpennon gulped as he nodded his head.

The party members entered the Dungeon side by side.

The first one to speak inside the Dungeon was Maetel.

“Artpe, there are a lot of something here.”

“A lot? It should be. This Dungeon has a pretty high monster regeneration, but it is frequented by... Huh.”

As soon as he entered the Dungeon, Artpe sensed an unusual amount of signatures. He activated his Read All Creation ability, and he was able to see that the numerous monsters were all Slimes.

A thought came to him at the same time.

‘When was this Dungeon became known to the humans?’

He was easily able to find the answer. In his past life, the Dungeon was first found by the hero’s party when they exited the palace. This Dungeon was revealed to the other adventurers after it was found by them. Of course, no one in this world knew about this place at this point in time!

“Ah. It seems we are the discoverers.”

“Discoverer? Is it something good?”

“Of course, it is good. No one has touched this place, so the rewards will be great. Since the traps are brand new, it’ll be hidden completely, so it’ll be thrilling to go through this place. You’ll also be able to experience monsters collapsing towards you.....”

“It sounds as if the negative outweighs the good!?”

Artpe looked down towards the end of the dark and damp corridor made out of wood. An incredibly large army of Slimes were coming towards them. Silpennon had also caught sight of them, and his face turned pale. Artpe let out a kind smile towards him.

“Cheer up. You can do this.”

“Wait a moment. This is a bit different from what we’ve talked about... Goo-ahk!?”

The Slimes knew that the intruders were ridiculously strong by instinct. This was why they immediately focused on Silpennon, who was the only one they had a shot of winning against.

Silpennon turned pale as he was about to encounter the Slimes. However, no one stepped forward to help him. In the end, he was instantly buried by the group of Slimes.

Artpe’s apathetic gaze turned towards Leseti. He asked her a question.

“Hey, guardian knight. What are you doing?”

“I trust in his highness. Well, if he dies, it can’t be help. By the way, Artpe, would you accept me into your party if I’m alone?”

“You are very forthright.”

“Ooh-ah-roo-koo-ahh-gyah-gyah-gyahk!”

It seemed Leseti’s way of thinking reached a turning point on her 20th year in life. Silpennon was buried by the Slimes, so it was hard to tell what he was yelling.

“Your highness, I have faith in in you! Still, just to safe, you should tell me what kind of funeral you want! You should have told me beforehand!”

“Ooh-gahh-gyahhhhhhhhk!”

After 45 minutes, Silpennon used his Dual Wielding style to kill all the Slimes. The three people smiled at him as if they knew he would have succeeded. He had no words for them. He just clenched his two fists, and he made a resolve!

“I’ll become stronger... I will become stronger at all cost!”

“Yes, that’s the spirit!”

“Ooh-ahhhhhhhhhh!”

This was how the hero’s party started their second Dungeon exploration.

Chapter 27

Dungeon, Evolution and Success (1)

In Artpe's past life, the hero's party was the first to explore the Slime Dungeon first. Afterwards, the Dungeon became popular amongst the adventurers.

First, the Dungeon produced only Slimes. This was why the danger to the adventurers was very low, and there weren't that many traps present. Moreover, when one killed a certain amount of Slimes, random treasure chests appeared when the Mana within the Dungeon was activated. This was why one could expect a decent amount of profit in this Dungeon.

"Basically, this is the best place for a beginner adventurer to grow. Moreover, it is also a great place to learn about Dungeons."

"So why are there so many Slimes-ahhhhhhhhk!"

"Tsk. He looked like he was going to die, yet he isn't dying."

"Who was it right now! Who clicked their tongue at me-ahhhhhhk!"

Silpennon was fighting hard. Normally, a talent bloomed the brightest in brutal situations rather than a relaxed surrounding. A single misstep would allow the group of Slimes to swallow him, and he would be digested by them. This was why he was squeezing out his abilities, and he was able to push himself past his limit.

When the two daggers danced in the air, the severed portion of the Slimes were sent flying. Silpennon's battle capability was increasing in real-time. As expected, a genius was a genius.

"It seems one doesn't need a coach in battle."

"Is that so? Why is he moving like that? I have questions..."

"You can't use yourself as the standard, Maetel. If so, everyone will be disqualified in the preliminaries."

“Too many! There are too many of them! Damn Slimes!”

The Slime Dungeon was different in many ways to the first Dungeon entered by Artpe and Maetel. The previous Dungeon had a limit as to how many monsters could form. This Dungeon created new monsters every time it had any spare Mana.

It didn't matter how many monsters were still left within. It spawned them as if it wanted to make the monsters explode out from the Dungeon!

The monsters spawned within the Dungeon was influenced by the Record and the Mana. These components were unique to each Dungeon. This was why an adventurer was unable to claim to be an expert after exploring one or two Dungeons.

“That is why the rooms are infested with Slimes. Well, the Slimes are activating all the traps, so at the very least, we don't have to worry about him dying from the traps.”

“This is all thanks to the Slimes!”

“Ooh-ohhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

Silpennon frantically swung the daggers in each hand as he cut into the Slimes. His Dual Wielding had evolved into level 2. His growth couldn't compare to what Maetel went through when she fought monsters for her first time in a Dungeon. Still, he wasn't too bad.

However, the Slimes overcame the death of their comrades as they kept coming. Their main objective was to eat Silpennon. The Slimes charged forward without looking back. Inevitably, the stronger ones started to show up.

“Stop! Don't come here!”

“Oh oh oh.”

The sight reminded Artpe of the time when the combined forces of all the countries on the continent were sent towards the Demon King's army. If a hundred of such group continued to come at him, Silpennon would succumb to them eventually!

“Eeeek. Help me before I fall!”

“I'll bury you in a sunny place, your highness.”

“How can you call yourself a guardian knight! You're fired! Ooh-gahhhhhhhh!”

Silpennon's struggle continued. He had been a level 7, but at some point, he had reached level 18. As he moved deeper into the Dungeon, the level of the Slimes continued to creep upwards. However, Silpennon was slowly getting a feel for fighting against a large group, so a good fight ensued.

Maetel tilted her head in confusion as she watched the life and death battle between human and Slimes.

“Artpe, didn't the Skeletons retreat when they were at a disadvantage? Why do these monsters continue to charge forward?”

“Silpennon looks beatable compared to us. These guys are constantly hungry. They'll keep attacking unless their opponent is stronger than them by a fair amount”

“Why don't they eat each other?”

The question was very well-timed.

“Slimes don't eat those that are from the same race as them. However, it isn't prudent to view monsters through common sense. An exception always exists.”

Artpe gave his explanation as he pointed towards Silpennon.

Silpennon had just killed a group of Slime, and he was wiping slime off of his body.

“Even if they are monsters from the same race, their behavior pattern changes depending on the Dungeon, environmental factors and other variables. Amongst the monsters, the change that the Slime undergoes is very well-defined and simple. Moreover, most Dungeons evolve to match the behavior patterns of the monsters.”

“So the Dungeons and monsters live and breathe together?”

“That's right. Maetel is smart.”

“Hoo-hoot.”

It was a rare praise, so there was a bright smile on Maetel's face. However, the only ones to laugh in an easygoing manner were the heroes.

“Your explanation makes me feel uneasy... It is as if you are trying to say our mere presence will cause changes in the behavior pattern of the Slimes.”

Leseti made a pretty sharp observation. When he heard her words, a chill went up Silpennon’s spine. He quickly turned towards Artpe to shout at him.

“I want to leave this crazy place!”

“It is too late. It has already started.”

After Artpe finished speaking, an ominous sound of Slimes moving across the floor was heard. The sound was amplified by several degrees.

“The Slimes... They are retreating?”

“It isn’t just the monsters. The Dungeon is really changing.....!”

There was a room at the end of the hallway that had been sealed. The room collapsed. It continued onto the next one and so forth. When a change occurred within a Dungeon, the most common phenomenon to occur was the collapse of the strict boundaries that kept the rooms separate.

It also meant that the Dungeon was becoming more dangerous, and the monsters would become stronger. In turn, the reward would also be greater. When an adventurer feels the change in the Dungeon, one would have to make a quick decision and act on it.

Silpennon had two choices. He could go forward or retreat.

“As I’ve said before, I’m getting out of here!”

“I have to express my regret to you. There are two type of changes that may occur within a Dungeon. There are the Dungeons that allow the adventures to retreat when they desire it. Then there are the ones that allow you to come in easily, but it won’t let you go easily.”

Artpe pointed back at the sealed entrance of the Dungeon, and he smirked.

“This Dungeon is the latter type.”

Silpennon's face crumpled.

"My god..... Doesn't this basically impose a death sentence on the adventurers!"

"Are you under some kind of delusion? Dungeons aren't here to help develop adventurers. The Dungeons aren't here to give them treasures. The Dungeons merely exists. The danger and opportunity is distributed equitably to all."

Of course, Artpe's Read All Creation ability allowed him to see what changes were occurring within the Dungeon. At its heart, this was a Slime Dungeon. Even if it evolved in innovative ways, the only one in danger would be Silpennon.

"The prerequisites that causes the change in the behavior pattern of the Slimes is very simple. First, the intruders has to be strong enough that the Slime can't win in a direct confrontation. Secondly, the intruder has to show no signs of retreating. The intruder has to rush forward continuously. Third, there has to be an overwhelming number of Slimes present. When all of these conditions are met, they start eating each other to become stronger."

"That's what's happening right now!"

Silpennon screamed those words out. The Slimes were wriggling around, and they were combining to become larger. Moreover, the walls of the Dungeon continued to collapse. The Slimes that were on alert within these rooms came forward. They kept rushing towards the Slime that was eating its own brethrens!

"Oh oh. It is rare to see one that can eat so much. If we are lucky, this might ratchet up a level."

In many ways, the current situation was good for them. First, the Slime Dungeon hadn't been found yet, so a lot of Slimes had amassed within. Their party including Silpennon was overpowered in terms of martial strength(Silpennon would disagree with this point). Then there was the massive amount of Mana in reserve that would allow the Dungeon to make changes alongside the monsters.

This was how Artpe changed history once again. The Slime Dungeon would never be a beginner's Dungeon from this point forward. This was the start of a hellhole that was now under the rule of the evolved Slime!

"Up a level? What do you mean by up a level? Are you perhaps talking about a high

rank Class! Tell me it ain't so!"

"It can't be, your highness. As you've seen, the Slimes are the lowest ranked monsters that range from level 5 to level 10. The probability of these monsters combining to form a monster over level 50 is....."

"Ah. The Dungeon is collapsing."

"Ooh-ohhhhhhhhhhhhh!?"

Once a Slime starts to eat its brethrens, it won't stop until it's sure it can eat all of the intruders.

In the beginning, Silpennon had driven the Slimes into a frenzy. Moreover, Artpe and the other members of his party was also within the Dungeon. The Slime knew it couldn't beat them with a single floor worth of Slimes, so it started preying on the Slimes on the next floor. The Dungeon received its intention, and the Dungeon collapsed the floor!

"Kyahhhhhk!"

"Koohk!?"

Of course, the adventurers, who had found this Dungeon, fell downwards.

"Artpe!"

"Tsk!"

Artpe swung his hand, and he extended three strands of Mana String. He was at the center as he wrapped Maetel, Leseti and Silpennon with the Mana Strings. They safely landed on the Dungeon's 2nd floor, which was below the collapsed hallway.

[Geeeeeeeeeee]

[Sss-oooooh, sss-oooooooooh]

"I'm starting to hear something!"

"Oh. If we are lucky, it might even gain self-awareness. Ee-yah. There are much more

Slimes on the 2nd floor! This is fun! They are all combining!”

“Ya-ho!”

“Did you guys come here to have fun!”

They were only Slimes, but the ones on the 2nd floor was much higher in level than the ones on the 1st floor. The Slimes didn’t care if the ceiling had fallen. They were all over the 2nd floor, and the giant Slime that was formed on the 1st floor started eating the other helpless Slimes.

[Keeeeeeeeeeeeeee]

“Oh oh. I don’t like it. The color of each Slime is being mixed inside that big Slime, and it is giving me a bad feeling!”

“How can the color of the Slime change like that, Artpe?”

“As a matter of fact.....”

“If you have the time to leisurely explain the ecology of a Slime, you should do something about that bastard, Artpe!”

As it absorbed new types of Slimes into its body, the giant Slime was dyed with all kinds of colors! The party watched the gluttonous Slime. It was akin to watching someone else’s house burn down. Artpe could see the level of the enormous Slime rise in real time.

[Big Slime]

[Level : 33]

“It’s all right. It is still a lousy monster. Ah. Of course, a single hit will kill you.”

“You should have told me that first!”

As if Silpennon had been waiting for such words, he quickly ran towards Leseti. Leseti talked about his grave and funeral, but she didn’t really plan on letting him die. She let him hide behind her.

“For your information, it is an Elite monster now.”

“Don’t we get better rewards for killing Elite monsters?”

“It is also stronger than the monsters at the same level.”

The Big Slime was well aware of its station. It had grown a lot, but it knew it would get cut into pieces by the other humans before it was able to kill the detestable red haired brat.

This was why it wasn't satisfied. It kept eating all the Slimes on the 2nd floor. In the process, the hidden passages of the Dungeons were revealed, and all kinds of rare Slimes started to pop out. These Slimes were much more colorful. They either possessed a faint trace of magical energy or they were stickier.

Of course, they became nutrients that fueled the growth of the Big Slime.

‘Uh. In the past, I’ve never heard of a rumor about secret passages inside this Dungeon.’

Of course, Artpe didn’t search out Dungeons in his past life, so he hadn’t had the chance to use his Read All Creation ability within them. Basically, a secret that had never been found in his previous life was revealed to him in the present.

Well, this was only a Slime Dungeon. There probably wasn’t anything great...

[Goo-ohhhhhh-ohng!]

“It let out a cry!”

“It’s shining!”

“Huh. I might have been wrong.”

The rare Records that wasn’t usually allowed to be accessed by a normal Slime had been gathered in one place. The Slime broke through another wall, and it took another step forward. The party members saw a very rare sight where a monster reached a high rank class through gaining a high level.

[Great Slime]

[Level : 50]

“Ee-yah. That one is splendid. It reached the status of an Elite Rare monster!”

“How long are you going to just watch!”

“Hmm. You are right. I should start taking action.”

Artpe found a good sized rock, and he put a decent amount of Mana into it. He threw it towards a nearby Slime. After the Slime ate the rock, it was absorbed into the Great Slime.

Silpennon cried out suddenly.

“I told you to take care of it! When did I tell you to feed the Slime!”

“Aigo. It is eating it well.”

“Stop feeding it!”

The Great Slime continued to evolve. However, the Slimes on the 2nd floor was all gone. Even the secret tunnels were all opened. It meant there wasn't a single monster left on the 2nd floor.

“Ah. It is easting the treasure chests.”

“It's all right. It takes a very long time for a Slime to digest objects. We can recover it later after we kill it. If the item can't last until then, it means it isn't worth that much!”

“I'm asking if you can really kill that thing!”

“Ah. The 2nd floor is also collapsing.”

Finally, the Dungeon's 3rd floor was revealed. They hadn't moved much, yet they were able to clear the 1st and 2nd floor. It was great, since they didn't have to waste any calories. He pitied Silpennon, who was wasting all the saved calories by screaming his head off.

“Wa-ah! The 3rd floor also has a lot of secret passageways!”

“The Great Slime’s behavior is set now. It will eat all of its brethrens. The other Slimes on this floor won’t consider us enemies. The Great Slime is there enemy. That is why...”

“Wa!”

The Great Slime was eating all the Slimes residing on the 3rd floor! While it was doing so, Artpe kept infusing nearby rocks with his Mana. He kept feeding the Slimes inside the Dungeon.

“How long are you going to just watch it?”

“I’m not sure. Maybe, until all the Slimes coalesces into one?”

“When will that occur!”

“That’s a very good question.”

Artpe let out a sweet smile as he answered the question.

“I have no idea!”

The Slime continued to stuff itself. It continued until they reached the 6th floor.

In Artpe’s past life, the Slime Dungeon had only been explored to the 5th floor.

Chapter 28

Dungeon, Evolution and Success (2)

[Giant Slime]

[Level : 102]

[Goo-ohhhhhhhh..... Oh-oh-oh-oh...]

“Ee-yah. We’ve actually arrived at this point.”

They were on the Dungeon’s 7th floor. For some reason, the adventurers had been barred from coming down this far for in the past. Artpe’s party had gained access to this region.

Of course, the one to act in their stead was the Giant Slime that had finally went past level 100. It was that particular Slime.

[Goo-ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

[Kee-heeeeeeeeeeee!]

The Giant Slime had grown so big that it had to destroy the Dungeon’s passageway to move around. The level 50 and over Slimes, who resided on the Dungeon’s 7th floor, were screaming as they ran away.

He had only known this place as a beginner’s Dungeon. He never expected to find high Class Slimes residing here. It seemed the Dungeon was structured in such a way that the hidden lower floors were only revealed when the corridors were destroyed.

Basically, a high Class party over level 250 had to come into a lowly Slime Dungeon, and they had to indiscriminately use Skills that would cause structural damage. Or they could do what Artpe’s party had done. Artpe had baited the Slimes to consume each other, and this resulted in the lower floors being revealed. This was a method that had never been used in his previous life.

[Goo-ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

“Oh. It’s eating them. It’s eating again.”

“How rare is that one, Artpe?”

It seemed even Maetel realized that this particular Slime was slowly turning into something remarkable. Moreover, the evolving monster and the involvement of the Dungeon reminded her of the first Dungeon they cleared. It reminded her of the Record Link, so her interest in the matter was getting deeper.

“Yes, let me see... It is a Special Rare Elite monster. Numerous requirements has to be met for a normal Slime to reach that point. It was possible, because no one had yet to set foot inside this Dungeon. It wouldn’t have happened if there wasn’t an enormous amount of Slimes spawned within this Dungeon.”

“It’s really an incredible monster!”

It had went past level 100 to reach Special Rare Elite status. It had almost reached level 120 right now, so it was a monster that would be able to kill Leseti if she wasn’t careful. Leseti unsheathed her sword from her waist. She was very tense as she asked Artpe a question.

“Shouldn’t we kill it soon? No, don’t we no choice but to kill it now?”

“Not really. I just had a thought. How great a Slime would form if it was allowed to swallow an entire Dungeon? I keep thinking about it!”

“Why does your curiosity get piqued over such a topic!”

In truth, the Giant Slime had assessed the battle capability of Artpe’s party when it reached level 100. It decided it wouldn’t fare well against them, so it charged towards the 7th floor.

As its level grew, its ability to sense Mana became more accurate. Basically, its intelligence was increasing.

Of course, despite this fact, the Slime continued to eat the Mana-infused rocks. Even if it was smart, it was only a smart Slime. The fact that it was able to level up didn’t mean that it could surpass the limitation of its race.

“Are the Mana-infused stones you are throwing accelerating the growth of the Slime?”

“It is as I’ve said before. It takes awhile for the Slime to digest objects infused with Mana. It is the same as the treasure chests and artifacts it ate as it descended from the 1st floor to the 6th floor. You don’t have to worry too much about it.”

“So why do you keep feeding it!”

Leseti and Silpennon didn’t have any deep knowledge about magic, so they were frustrated at Artpe’s bizarre actions. On the other hand, Maetel had a rough idea on what he was doing.

She had hunted in a Dungeon with him for the past year. In that period of time, she had never seen Artpe waste a single drop of Mana.

“Uh. The 7th floor is collapsing.”

“Wow. There’s a silver treasure chest over there. Ah. The Slime ate it.”

“This isn’t the time to leisurely watch the Slime eat!”

The same scenario kept repeating, so Artpe was used to wrapping Mana Strings around the party members. Artpe made sure he wasn’t hurting the others as they landed softly on the Dungeon’s 8th floor.

[Sheeeeeeee-sheeeeeeee.]

[Gee-gee-gee-gee.]

There were Slimes over level 70 residing on this floor. Each Slime was considered to be rare in terms of probability of them making an appearance in the world.

They were all born with great attributes. Some could use simple magic or they could change a part of their body. Some had a special camouflage ability, and others could counterattack when they were hit with a subpar attack on reflex. The variety of Slimes that existed here was vast. The Slimes were quite surprising...!

[Goo-ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhng!]

The Giant Slime was eating every single one of them. The other Slimes were showing

up in style, but they were swallowed before they could do anything. The Big Slime was the calamity of the Dungeon! It was like the second coming of the Demon King within this Dungeon!

“I kinda feel bad for the Slimes now.....”

“Hey, look at that. It is extending its body to eat them all at once.”

It seemed the Giant Slime was tired of eating them one by one. It extended its body from side to side, and it swept over the Slimes that were all over the Dungeon. The Giant Slime melted them all down. It looked as if a wave was sweeping through the Dungeon.

“That looks like a wave? It is so pretty.....”

“Someday, I’ll take you to a real ocean.”

“Yes! I’ll look forward to it, Artpe!”

The two Heroes were mellow even as they watched the Giant Slime stuff itself. Silpennon looked at them with salty eyes as he mumbled to himself.

“Artpe was able to compare such a horrifying sight to a wave, and Maetel admired him for it. I think both of them has a screw loose.....”

“It seems your highness’ delusions are slowly becoming shattered.”

When it ate all the Slimes on the 8th floor, the Giant Slime had reached level 120. At this point, Leseti would have to fight through the day and night for four days to kill it.

“A... Artpe... Are you sure it isn’t time yet?”

“Leseti.”

Artpe tossed several rocks with significant amount of Mana infused within them. He helped satiate the appetite of the Giant Slime then he spoke to Leseti with a voice that was low and silky.

“Ooht.”

At his solemn attitude, Leseti once again failed to act her age as her heart beat faster. However, she came to her senses when she heard the words coming out of his mouth.

“We are about to see something that will never happen again in history. Even if I have to sacrifice Silpennon’s life and your life, I’ll have to watch this unfold!”

“Why don’t you or Maetel sacrifice your own lives!”

Artpe snorted at her ridiculous words. He gave a response to her words.

“I don’t know about you guys, but we won’t fall to a mere Slime.”

“You cowardly hero! Kill it immediately! Let’s kill that bastard!”

When it ate everything on the 8th floor, the Giant Slime took time to think this over. Should it just charge them? Was it strong enough?

It was confident that it could eat the female knight and the red haired brat. However, the other two brats made it feel uneasy. If it was uneasy, it had to eat more. The Giant Slime made a firm resolve as it made a request to the Dungeon.

Open the 9th floor!

“Maybe, this is what happens when a Dungeon encounters a hero. It could be a special change that occurs to match the current situation of the heroes.”

Artpe watched the Giant Slime eat the level 100 and above Slimes on the 9th floor. He became pretty sober as he mumbled to himself. Maetel tilted her head in puzzlement as she asked him a question.

“Does that hold true when we face other adventurers?”

“What I’m discussing right now isn’t that simple of a problem. A hero is born when a Demon King appears. A hero’s presence could create a Dungeon, a city or even a country. A hero causes a fundamental change to one’s surrounding.”

He had explained this before to Maetel once. He wasn’t joking. It was real. The hero’s existence itself was a miracle, and the hero was the focal point in causing changes to the Records.

If one thought about it from that perspective, the biggest variable causing his past life and the current life to change so starkly wasn't the action of Maetel. The change might be driven by the existence of the newly born hero in Artpe.

"Of course, a hero possesses incredible abilities within one's body. However, they have an uncharted ability to cause change to a situation. Maybe, this Dungeon and the growth of the Slime might be aggressively helped by our presence."

The Slime eventually went over level 150. It was so large that it wasn't able to move unless it caused changes to its body. The amount and density of the magical energy within its body wasn't normal anymore.

These were Slimes that would have probably rested inside the heart of the Dungeon until end of time, yet the Dungeon opened up the walls when the floor was broken by the Giant Slime. The Giant Slime moved at the guidance of the Dungeon, and the other Slimes were letting out wails of resentment.

[Goo-ohhhhhhhhhhh.]

"That's right. You are eating well."

Artpe was feeding the Giant Slime by habit. As he threw the rocks infused with Mana, he looked up. His eyes were letting out a purple light as he used his Read All Creation ability. He gathered all information from his surrounding.

There was the crumbled walls, and the hallway that looked like it was about to fall apart. Then there was the remains of the Slimes and the Giant Slime that was eating all of them.

He was slowly able to see the entire structure of the Dungeon.

"The 10th floor is the end."

"Artpe, your eyes....."

Silpennon was taken aback as he sensed unfathomable energy within Artpe's eyes. Normally, it wasn't something people noticed. This made Artpe have a pretty good opinion of Silpennon.

"Is that perhaps the Mystic Eyes?"

“It’s a secret.”

Artpe grinned as he extended one hand. As always, three strands of Mana String came out.

“We just have to endure it once more. You should just guard your master, Leseti. Silpennon, you should look at what happens with both eyes wide open.”

“You.....”

A fair amount of time had passed since they had entered the Dungeon. They had descended from the 1st floor to the 9th floor. They watched the evolution of a single Slime. It had been a fun and exciting experience, but... It was time for the heroes to act in earnest.

“Just endure it once more. You should even be careful about breathing on the 10th floor. Ah. Unsheathe your sword, Maetel.”

“Yes!”

“Please use the longsword instead of the bastard sword.”

“.....yes!”

The Slimes on the 9th floor were all gone now. The Giant Slime had achieved level 168, and it thought it had a chance against them. It dragged its enormous body towards Artpe’s party. It was very slow.

No, it had thought about going down to the 10th floor, but it decided to confront them on the 9th floor! Silpennon was about to let out words of complaint when Artpe opened his mouth. He let out a quiet instruction, and it changed turned the entire situation on its head.

“Maetel, Berserk. Show off your power. You should only show it off.”

“Yes, I understand what you are trying to say.”

“Berserk!?”

Leseti knew about the terrifying Buff Skill, so she let out a shout. She wrapped up

Silpennon, and she distanced herself from Maetel.

However, she thought over what he had said. Berserk wasn't a skill that could be activated at will. Wasn't it automatically activated in extreme circumstances? Moreover, Maetel was a brat, who received her Class only a year ago. How could she handle Berserk! It probably wasn't Berserk. Leseti thought Maetel was using an artifact's option or a skill that was a poor imitation of Berserk. She had already made up her mind as she observed Maetel.....

"Hoo-oo..... Hoohp."

"What the... She can activate Berserk at will!?"

When she realized Maetel could freely control this vast power, Leseti was thunderstruck.

Until now, Maetel had already shown herself to be strong. However, when she used the Bone Gauntlet's buff option and Berserk, she became as strong as a being at level 200.

How ridiculous was this! The leader of this country's order of knights had yet to pass the level 200 threshold. A mere 13 year old child hero was displaying power of that caliber!

Of course, Maetel was using Berserk, but she was able to have full control over the skill. She was as strong as most level 200 being, who possessed a high rank Class.

Maetel put her rising anger into her longsword. She had a very refined posture, which was ill-matched with her slender body. She pointed the sword at the Giant Slime as she opened her mouth.

"Are you really going to fight me?"

[Goo... goo-ohhhhhhh.....!]

Of course, the Giant Slime could feel how strong she was. It didn't take long to find out its answer. It immediately broke the hallway that separated the 9th and 10th floor. It dragged the party down towards the 10th floor!

[Goo-ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhh-ohng!]

“Yes!”

As if he had been waiting for this moment, Artpe stylishly surrounded the Mana Strings around the party as they landed on the 10th floor.

The Giant Slime had gotten cold feet when it saw Maetel’s show of force. It didn’t even look back as it ran rampant as it ate everything. The party was left behind, and they watched the result of Maetel showing her power once. Silpennon and Leseti were too dumbfounded to speak.

“Good job, Maetel.”

“Don’t. If you give me too much praise, I’ll feel too good and the Berserk will be canceled.”

Maetel was trying very hard not to smile as she maintained her stance. Artpe snickered at her words, and he took out an item from his Dimensional Pouch.

“Uh?”

“Uh.....!?”

When Silpennon and Leseti recognized it, they both let out a strangled sound at the same time. Artpe ignored them, and he focused his Mana into the item.

After being injected with Mana, the Demite’s Gemstone was activated. It started emitting purple light that was brighter than the light within Artpe’s eyes.

Chapter 29

Dungeon, Evolution and Success (3)

“That! Give it back to me!”

“You can’t take back what you gave me.”

“Ooh-gooooo.”

The two of them now knew the value of the gem. They still didn’t know what kind of gem it was, but at the very least, they knew that it was the main reason why men had desperately tracked them down when they ran away from the palace.

However, Artpe stuck out his red tongue as he teased them. He continued to pour Mana into the Demite’s Gemstone.

“Can you hear me? No , I don’t think it can communicate yet.”

The Demite’s Gemstone won’t show its true worth until it was refined.

However, it was such an amazing gem that it could amplify one’s Mana, and it had the ability to remember magic spells. Even at its current form, it was a remarkable item. Artpe was satisfied with it until now.

“What are you trying to do with that! Are you perhaps going to feed it to the Slime like the rocks from before?”

“You are mad. If you do that, the Slime would most definitely evolve a step forward...”

“That is what I want.”

The Giant Slime was desperately looking for a power that would allow it to overpower Maetel.

Again, the Dungeon’s 10th floor acted in concert with the Giant Slime’s struggle. Large changes occurred once again. The walls that divided the rooms melted away. All the

secret passageways were revealed. The Dungeon allowed the Giant Slime to encounter the rest of the remaining Slimes.

[Keeeeeeee!]

[Gee-geek! Gee-gee-gee!]

The floor abruptly became a large plaza, and all the Slimes thrown away by the Dungeon knew what the Giant Slime intended. They didn't want to die in vain, so they did their best to oppose the Giant Slime.

The party was watching mere Slimes. It would theoretically be ridiculous for them to feel any emotions for the Slimes. However, they were faced with an impressive and overwhelming sight.

"Even such simple organisms fight hard to live..."

"They are no different than humans."

"What kind of... Humans are...!"

"Quiet."

He didn't want to have a discourse about life with a brat. Artpe let out a deep sigh, then for the last time, he injected his Mana into the Demite's Gemstone.

His preparation was at an end.

"How's your Mana reserve, Maetel?"

"If it is just maintaining Berserk, I have enough. If I use the Option... I think I can use it about three times."

"All right. You should be on standby."

Artpe didn't hesitate as he threw the purple colored gemstone held by his hand. Coincidentally, one of the Slime, who had been opposing the Giant Slime, swallowed it.

[Gee-eeee-eeee]

“It really ate it!”

Of course, it didn't matter how high the Slime's level was. The Demite's Gemstone wasn't an item that would be dissolved so easily. The Slime, who possessed the gem, knew it had become stronger. It coordinated with the other Slimes to attack the Giant Slime.

[Goo-ohhhhhhhhhhhh!]

The Giant Slime ate all of them. The Giant Slime's wound healed easily from just eating its brethren.

The Giant Slime's anatomy was simple, so it was easy for it to heal itself. By eating its brethren, it was able to grow immediately, and it was leveling up at a fast pace. This was why the Giant Slime had targeted them.

“The number of Slimes is decreasing.”

“In the beginning, there were around 5,000 of them.”

“I don't know how this Dungeon was made, but the effects of Mana becomes stronger as one travels deeper into the Dungeon. This is why this floor has stronger Slimes, and they are more numerous here.”

It was easier for strong monsters to spawn at location with high density of Mana. Even if it was Maetel and Artpe, it would have taken them several days to kill all the Slimes that came out all at once from the secret passageways. However, the Giant Slime was killing all of them instead.

“This really is like the Record Link!”

“It isn't a completely closed system, so it won't be efficient like the Record Link. However, if one wants to see an organism 'evolve', this might be a better method than the Record Link.”

“I look forward to it!”

It was very rare to come across such a high ranked Slime, so they would be able to look forward to the reward. Artpe and Maetel was still conversing in a calm manner in front of such an overwhelming spectacle. Silpennon and Leseti were taken aback by this

fact, but they reached a point where they decided not to think about it any further.

“Ah. It went in.”

The Delmite’s Gemstone was inside the Giant Slime’s body. At that moment, the numerous mana-infused stones that was within its body reacted to the Delmite’s Gemstone. A small resonance started to occur. Of course, this was what Artpe had been aiming for.

“I see the end to the Slimes.”

“We really don't have much time left. Be ready, Maetel.”

“Yes, I’m ready.”

There really were many varieties of Slimes nesting here. Dungeons were something that was rare on the continent. Maybe they were worth researching.

However, he was watching a single Slime consolidating all the Slimes it had eaten.

[Geeeeeeeeeeeeeee!]

In the end, all the structures on the 10th floor were gone, and the whole floor had been turned into a wide open plaza. If one discounted the living and breathing members of Artpe’s party, there was only one Giant Slime on the floor.

It had eaten everything within the Dungeon. Everything that possessed Mana was within its body. This was an unprecedented feat. This being was pushing itself towards a higher Class.

[Goo-ohhhhhhhhhhhng!]

“My god. It is letting out light... This is...”

“The Slime must be evolving!”

“There is a higher Class that can be reached!?”

Artpe’s eyes let out a strange light as he looked at the Slime letting out light from all over its body. This was something that had never been seen before on this continent.

This moment was sweet and exciting!

Artpe had a smile on his lips before he knew it. He had come here in an attempt to educate Silpennon, so he had never expected to hit a jackpot here. As expected, a Demon... A human should be good to other people in one's life!

[Giant Slime]

[Level : 199]

When it went past level 100, it was given the name of Giant Slime.

At some point, a much bigger body appeared from within the light.

[Huge Slime]

[Level : 200]

The body of the Slime was letting out a rainbow light. Its body possessed enormous amount of Mana, and its intelligence increased by another tier.

Its body was much bigger than before, but when it moved, it was more efficient in its use of energy. Artpe immediately checked it with his Read All Creation ability, and he found out the Slime had several new skills. These skills helped the Slime efficiently capture and digest its prey. These needed skills were gathered in one place to strengthen the Slime.

The part that gave Artpe most joy was its name of Huge Slime. It sounded extremely simple, but the name of this entity never existed on this continent before. If he ranked how rare it was, it would probably be considered to be ultra rare.

“There we go.”

[There we go.]

It was as if Artpe and Slime had made a promise to speak at the same time.

As expected, it gained enough intelligence to be able decipher the human's intention!

[I can eat you all!]

When its body was trembling from delight, Artpe raised his voice to yell out loudly.

“You can attack it now, Maetel!”

“Understood!”

[I can now eat you all!]

The Slime was large enough to fill the plaza. The evolved Slime attacked the party. However, before it could use its skills, the Sword Energy gathered at the tip of the long sword was let loose. The golden energy traveled in a straight line to impact on the Slime!

[This isn't enough.....!]

The Huge Slime was strengthened so much that Maetel's Mana-infused attack pierced its body once before it healed its wound. Maetel's attack stalled the Slime for only 3 seconds!

“Hyper Rubbing!”

However, Artpe had completed all his preparations beforehand, so he had plenty of time to pull the trigger.

[Ggoo-ooooo-ooohk!?!]

The Huge Slime let out a terrible scream as its body started to writhe. The preys it had wanted to eat was right in front of it, yet it started to hit its body against the blameless Dungeon floor and walls. It threw a fit.

It had gained higher intelligence, so the pain it perceived had increased dramatically. The fact that it had been sure of its victory made the defeat a bitter pill to swallow.

“I never knew magic could be used this way.....”

“Magicians are a scary existence!”

The target of Artpe's Hyper Rubbing were the rocks and the Delmite's Gemstone swallowed by the Slime.

It had assumed that these objects were part of its body, but they started rubbing crazily against its body as if they had a mind of its own. There was no way it could endure the spell without losing its mind!

[Goo-oooooooooh……!]

Still, it refused to give up. It had broken through from the 1st floor to the 10th floor, and it had greedily eaten all the members of its race. Mere pain wouldn't make it give up on its objective. Its greed was too strong for that to happen.

“Tsk. As expected, this level of attack won't cut it.”

The Delmite's Gemstone boosted the power of Hyper Rubbing by a ridiculous amount, so he had hoped this attack would be able to bring down the Slime. However, he had underestimated its willpower.

[Goo-ooohhhhhh! I'll eat! I'll eat! I'll eat! I'll eat!]

Even as its body was breaking apart from within, it moved its body to attack the party. When Silpennon and Leseti saw the enormous body of the Slime move slowly towards them, they didn't offer any resistance. They just trembled in fear.

At that moment, Artpe put one hand atop Maetel's hand, which was gripping the longsword.

“Let's attack it for the second time, Maetel.”

“Y... yes...”

This was physical contact initiated by Artpe. Maetel's heart felt as if it was on cloud nine. She was so happy that it was difficult to maintain her Berserk skill. If the skill was canceled, they would lose to the Slime.

She was having a hard time controlling her emotions, so her eyes started to spin.

Artpe didn't realize what she was feeling. He gave her an order with a calm voice.

“You just have to attack like before. You should gather your energy and shoot it towards the Slime. I'll take care of the rest.”

“Yes, I’ll try.....”

Maetel worked desperately to control her heart, and she gathered her Mana at the tip of her sword. At that moment, he used the Mana Link to provide Mana to her. When she realized what was happening, Maetel used Record Divide, so Artpe could share more Mana with her.

Even if it was the same skill, its power would be amplified by a lot.

“Shoot it. Mana String.”

Moreover, it was possible for the two of them to share each other’s skills and options! It was possible to combine all of them into one attack!

“!?”

Maetel felt the energy gathered inside the longsword change through magic, but she used her instinct to shoot it.

There were black stripes mixed in with the golden light as background. This strange energy impacted on the Huge Slime’s body, and it pierced through...

[Koo-ahhhhhhhhhng!]

Artpe’s will took hold of the attack. The trajectory changed sharply as the attack drilled deeper into its body once again!

“Hyper Rubbing!”

The attack wasn’t at an end yet. The Mana Strings that had manifested around the beam of light were imbued with the option of Hyper Rubbing. The energy within him manifested as friction within, and it was being delivered right into the Slime!

It was a ridiculous composite spell. The method Artpe had used possessed such a high degree of difficulty that it would have made all the other magicians on the continent feel disheartened!

“As expected, a mage is amazing!”

“Artpe was always amazing!”

“C... cool.....”

Of course, everyone gathered in this place were idiots, so the only feedback he received was the fact that it was cool and amazing!

[Koo-ohhhhhhhhhhhhhng!]

The Huge Slime let out a roar that contained its rage and pain. It finally acquired the power that would enable it to eat all of its enemies. It had been so sure, yet an unexpected attack had been used against it!

It couldn't use its power, because the stones within its body were constantly vibrating. On top of that, an additional attack had been used against it. It was so painful that it was driving it nuts!

[I'll kill you at all cost! I'll kill and eat you! I'll kill you!]

“Are you going to ask the Dungeon for help again? Well, the Dungeon no longer has anything hidden away that it can give you. So what can you do?”

There was a cruel light in Artpe's eyes as he looked at his struggling enemy. The Slime extended its body to hit the wall, and it attempted to eat the weaker members of Artpe's party. However, all of its attempts were thwarted by the Hyper Rubbing.

It was as he said. The Dungeon had given everything it had hidden to the Huge Slime. There were no methods available to the Huge Slime that would allow it to strengthen itself again. Its struggle was wasted. It was all in vain.

“Uh. The purple gem.....”

Leseti found herself to be pathetic, since she was trembling in front of the enemy without putting up any resistance. She tried to right herself when she caught sight of the change that was occurring to the gem within the struggling Huge Slime. The purple light was getting stronger as time passed.

“Ah. As that bastard reached the high rank Class, its ability to dissolve substance also increased by a lot. The Demite's Gemstone is probably providing it with more power as it become more refined as time passes.”

When Artpe kindly gave an explanation, Leseti's expression turned more peculiar.

“You... you planned on refining the gem, while attacking your enemy...!?”

“Isn’t it obvious? If I wanted to kill it, I could have killed it with my modified Mana.”

“You.....!”

Artpe had an impudent smile on his face as he replied to her. Leseti grinded her teeth when she saw the annoying smile of the brat. However, she couldn’t deny she was slightly in love with that smile.

After three minutes, the Huge Slime stopped its fruitless struggles. It meekly faced its death.

A new piece of history was recorded on the continent, and it was quietly buried at that moment.

Chapter 30

Dungeon, Evolution and Success (4)

“Ooh-ahhhhhhh!”

“You are doing well, Silpennon. You should roll a little bit to the left. There’s a lot of dusts over there.”

“You evil bastaaaaaaaard!”

Silpennon let out a weird groan as he rolled around on the ground. This was a phenomena that occurred when one leveled up all at once.

“His highness barely helped in killing that Slime, so why did he get a share of the EXP?”

Unlike Silpennon, Leseti hadn’t received a single iota of experience. She grinded her teeth as she asked the question. She was jealous of the crown prince, who was rolling around on the ground. He actually looked favorably on the female knight for her sentiment, so he gave a friendly reply.

“Your understanding of this matter is fundamentally wrong. That Slime started eating its brethren, because it feared Silpennon. At that point, Silpennon had pulled the aggro of that Slime, and he probably inflicted some damage too. This is the reason why it counted as Silpennon contributing to the battle.”

“It isn’t much of a contribution!”

Leseti was acting as if she was dissatisfied about Silpennon’s growth. Silpennon bellowed from the ground as he sacrificed his clothes by wiping the dust of the floor.

“Ggoo-ahhhhh! Your master is leveling up, so why are you complaining!”

“However, your highness, you are useless even if you level up a lot!”

“Did you just say I’m useless... Ooh-gyahhhhhhh!”

Artpe wondered how the relation between the master and servant would change in the future. However, it was no concern of his... Artpe let out a sigh as he gave a supplemental explanation.

“It is as you’ve said. The percentage of EXP given to Silpennon wasn’t high. At most, it was around three percent. But.....”

“Are you saying he was able to achieve such an explosive growth with only 3 percent...”

“You’ve hit the nail on the head.”

The only traces of the Huge Slime left behind was the wreckage. It had been a level 200 Dungeon monster, and it was the Dungeon’s boss. It had been a Elite Ultra Rank monster.

Normally, the monster’s record and EXP increased substantially based on Rank and its position. Even if Silpennon had barely contributed, it wasn’t strange to see him increase in level by over 20.

“Moreover, you don’t have to worry too much about his Skills either. We’ll get the [Cud] Bonus too.”

Cud was a humorous term that was coined for the skill where one’s Skill grew once more after the monster was killed. The skill grew under the influence of the monster’s Record, and the achievements in battle. However, Leseti’s expression still indicated that she was having a hard time accepting the situation.

“Still, he didn’t even strike that particular Slime with his sword.....”

“Well, it seems he was able to do so.”

Silpennon was finished with his continuous level up. He shakily got up from the ground. Artpe spoke lightly as he looked over Silpennon with his Read All Creation ability. Above his head, there were words that were more spectacular than what was seen on Maetel once before.

[Silpennon Le Diaz]

[Level : 49]

[Crown Prince]

[Dual Wield Lv7]

[Battle Step Lv6]

When facing the Slime, it would have been enough to just stab it once. He would have needed to tweak the Slime's body. When the level 200 high rank Class monster was killed, the result of the battle was used on his skills. This was why Silpennon possessed ridiculously high level Skills compared to his actual level.

On top of that, he was so exceptionally talented that there was a bonus added to his skill growth. If one only considered the basic Skill level, Silpennon wasn't that far off from Leseti!

Of course, Artpe wasn't going to breakdown all the information, but it was enough information for Leseti to become shocked and anguished.

"If I knew this would happen, I would have hit it with my sword once!"

"If the monster doesn't become truly threatened by your action, it will have no effect. Silpennon went through his growth, because he attacked the Slime before it evolved."

"Why does the prince always have good luck!"

"Why are you dissatisfied with my luck being good, Leseeeeeeti!"

Leseti kept complaining, and Silpennon gnashed his teeth. At that point, he decided to just drop the subject. However, it seemed Leseti still had questions she wanted to ask of Artpe.

"Does this mean you guys are too high in level to experience level ups from the Slime's EXP?"

"No, we aren't there yet... We are just used to this kind of incidents."

"You became accustomed to it!?"

"Mmmm. Could you stand still for a moment.?"

“Kyahhh!?”

Artpe could see his reflection in her large innocent blue eyes, so he activated his Read All Creation ability to check his own info.

[Artpe]

[Hero]

[Level : 163]

[Mana String Lv7]

[Hyper Rubbing Lv24]

[Mana Control Lv35]

[Throw Lv28]

[.....]

“You... you! Do you think I’ll fall for you if you do this! You brat! You braaaaaat!”

“.....why did I promote such a doofus to the role as my knight protector...”

She had suddenly become Artpe’s mirror. Leseti’s face turned red as she got angry. However, Artpe was deep within his thoughts, so her words didn’t really register with. He let go of the angry Leseti, and he wallowed deep in his woes.

‘This is way too fast.’

He had graduated from the beginner’s Dungeon at level 145. He had fought the knights dressed in black not too long ago, but they were lower in level by dozen levels or more.

However, he had increased by 18 levels in one fell swoop when the Huge Slime was killed. It goes without saying that the Skills used in killing the Slime had grown too.

Even if their opponent was special, this was too much.

As he was thinking this, he turned his thoughts towards the Mana Link and the Record

Divide.

‘Did Maetel’s ability perhaps influence me...!?’

If so, that would be the worst! Artpe quickly turned to look at Maetel!

[Maetel]

[Level : 174]

“Good. I worried for nothing.”

She was still growing at a stable yet crazy speed!

“You didn’t worry for nothing. It is rude to stare at another woman like that! Hurry up and apologize to her!”

“What?”

For some reason, Maetel had raised her voice, and she berated Artpe! Both of her cheeks were puffed out, and she stamped towards him. She pulled Artpe towards her side, and she bowed towards Leseti.

“I’m sorry. From now on, I won’t let him get close to you, Ms Leseti. You can be at ease now.”

“Uh. Mmm. Ooh-mmmm..... No, you don’t really have to go that far...”

“Never! I’ll make sure he never gets close to you! I’ll do it even if Ms. Leseti might get hurt a little bit in the process!”

“Why me!?”

Was her Berserk skill still activated!

It seemed Maetel’s gaze was so frightening that Leseti hide behind Silpennon. She made him her shield. She was a true specimen of a knight protector.

“Stop going off topic. Anyways, Artpe, some change is occurring over there.”

Silpennon was slowly getting a sense of who he should trust, and who he should ignore. He pointed towards the middle of the destroyed plaza of the Dungeon where a light was emanating. He called after Artpe when he saw it. Artpe had a good idea what Silpennon was feeling, so he smirked as he gave a reply.

“Dungeons are a place where one could plunder a lot of goods. This happens when one clears a floor of a Dungeon or when one does a perfect clear. The Dungeon Merchants, who has a contract with the Dungeons, will show up. Their goal is to obtain the goods.”

“Is it a form of summoning magic? It really is an advanced form of magic.”

While they were conversing, the pillar of light faded away. A woman, who was pretty familiar to Artpe and Maetel, made her appearance.

“Hello, customers! It has only been couple days, yet we meet again!”

“Kek. It’s this ajumma again.”

“I don’t like that ajumma.....”

She had smooth brown skin, and the humble clothes of a merchant couldn’t hide her bodacious body. Her silver hair shone as if it was emitting light on its own. Then there was her silver eyes. She had slightly elongated, yet sharp eyes. It was none other than the middleman of the Anywhere company, Mycenae.

“I thought you would be bit more happy to see me. What kind of reaction is this? Even I would be hurt a little bit..... Huh? Your party has grown?”

“You really appeared..... Even the royal family would have a hard time believing such a ridiculous beauty exists, and you have long ears. Are you one of the fabled Elves?”

“Hello, new customer. It is forbidden to inquire about the identity of a Dungeon merchant.”

Mycenae put on her business smile as she replied with a firm voice. Silpennon was a bit frightened by her, so he took couple steps back. At the same time, Artpe supplemented his words with an apathetic voice.

“If you can find out the information without your opponent finding out, it isn’t forbidden. Of course, if you are find out, you will be in big trouble like this ajumma.”

“Koohk. I failed again.....!”

Artpe effortlessly created a Mana String. He swung it, and it shattered the observation magic that was about to be used secretly on Silpennon and Leseti. She mumbled to herself as she ground her teeth.

“I never expected you to be able to sense and interfere with observation magic that wasn’t directed at you..... Still, I was able to learn more about your peerless ability, so I didn’t take a loss!”

“However, you’ll be taking a loss from now on. I want 30% discount.”

“Ooh-goong. Ooh-oong--oohk.”

Mycenae let out a moan that was difficult to decipher. At this point, it was fair to wonder if she enjoyed being taken advantage of by Artpe.

It was as if Silpennon had passed a baton off to Mycenae. She looked as if she wanted to roll around on the floor. Artpe ignored Mycenae. He started looting the Huge Slime with Maetel.

The first thing he picked up was the precious Demite’s Gemstone. The Huge Slime’s ability was beyond expectation. One could see that some parts of the hard gem were melted.

“Let’s see..... Oh.”

Artpe poured water over it to wash away the slime. He had a satisfied expression as he looked at the Delmite’s Gemstone, which was letting out more light than before. He mumbled to himself.

“If 50 more Huge Slimes show up, I think I’ll be able to refine it.”

“You want to create 50 more of this monster!?”

“Unfortunately, it is impossible to do so, so don’t be frightened. It is rare to find an opportunity that allows one to easily level up like this.”

“Easily.....”

It had also regurgitated all the treasures it ate coming down to this floor. It also produced Artifacts and gold coins when the Records and Mana of the Slime was consolidated. When Maetel saw one of the items, she let out a happy shout.

“It’s a Skill Book!”

“Unfortunately, the two of us already learned that one.”

The Skill Book was called Mana Control. It was a Skill that could be learned after Mana Detection. It was a Skill everyone, who aspired to be a level 100 high rank Class, must learn.

However, it was very difficult to learn it by oneself. It was hard even for those that were born with the potential for becoming a magician. Since the skill can’t be self-taught, one had to buy it with money. There were a lot of cases where people gave up on becoming a level 100 high rank Class, because they couldn’t acquire the book.

Maetel had learned such a skill at level 2. It really highlighted how bad of a cheat her talent was. Nothing more had to be said about that subject.

“Since we already learned this Skill, we’ll merely increase our Mana by a little bit if we use it...”

That wasn’t a bad option, but in many ways, it would be best to just sell the Skill Book. The demand for the Mana Control Skill was high, yet there was an absolute shortage in supply. It was the number one in demand amongst the high rank Skills.

Basically, it was expensive. It was very expensive.

“That is why at this point...”

Artpe looked at Silpennon, who was looking at him with an absent minded face. Artpe knew Silpennon had no knowledge of it, yet he asked in a sly manner.

“Do you know what Mana Control is?”

“What is it?”

“I knew it. You should listen carefully.”

Artpe grinned as he made a rough outline of the skill Silpennon had to learn. Artpe even ranked the order in which Silpennon had to learn it!

Of course, the first one on the list was Mana Control.

“You.....”

“I’ll tell you this beforehand, but I’m not lying.”

“You are lying!”

“He said he’s not lying.”

“He isn’t lying, your highness. It is true that even I had to buy and learn Mana Control with money. Most people are weeded out at this point. Of course, I was only able to buy it easily, because I had the backing of the throne.”

Mycenae and Leseti intruded at the right time to back up Artpe’s words!

Despite their words, Silpennon groaned. He mulled over it before he shook his head from side to side.

“I’ll learned Mana Control through my talent alone! I can do it! I’m someone that’ll go through with what I said!”

“All right. I’ll just sell this then. How much are you will to give me for this, ajumma?”

“I told you I’m not an ajumma! I’ll buy it for 300 gold. Of course, when I resell it, I’ll sell it for over 350 gold!”

“All right. I’m being generous. Three hundred gold will...”

“Wait a moment!”

The retail price jumped 50 gold from the trade price. At that moment, Silpennon yelled out to halt the deal. Artpe and Mycenae grinned at the same time, and they turned to look at him.

“Why? Did you change your mind?”

“I’m in the middle of a negotiation. Could you not interfere, customer?”

It was as if the the times when they growled at each other never existed. When they were trying to screw over someone else, the two of them worked in absolute harmony! Silpennon grinded his teeth as he yelled out his words.

“I’ll kill you all someday! However, I’ll buy that! Since I am one of your party members, I expect a discount!?”

“Of course. I’ll take your contributions into consideration, and I’ll give you a discount. I’ll sell it to you for cheap at the price of 260 gold.”

Artpe smiled as he handed over the Skill Book to Silpennon.

Silpennon took out gold coins from his Dimensional Pouch, and he let out a sigh.

Mycenae felt sympathy for him, but she knew Silpennon had sealed his defeat when he tried to go against Artpe’s design.

“Ah. You do realize you have to switch your Class first right? If you are dumb enough to go into any great temple to do it, your identity will be revealed. You should do it by buying a consumable artifact.”

“So how much is that!”

Artpe gave a sign to Mycenae. She had already been anticipating this move. She didn’t want to lose out on a sales opportunity, so she quickly yelled out the price.

“It is 300 gold, customer!”

“Ggoo-roo-ooh-ahhhhhhhhk!”

This was the moment when the current Crown Prince took a step forward to become the future thief.

Chapter 31

Dungeon, Evolution and Success (5)

[Silpennon (Le Diaz)]

[Thief]

[Level : 49]

Silpennon purchased the Crystal Ball of Blessing for 300 gold, and he was able to safely choose his new class. There was no funny business like a third hero making an appearance. It was the same as what Artpe had seen in his past life. The path to being a thief was opened to Silpennon.

The Crystal Ball of Blessing was a very expensive and rare artifact. After registering its owner, it could be used several more times. Silpennon could use it to open the path to his high rank Class in the future.

“Ho-oooh. I’m a thief.”

“Koohk. He really is a thief.....”

Inwardly, Artpe had worried another change would occur, but he could relax now.

When the crown prince she had served was turned into a thief, Leseti became forlorn.

“Maybe I should give up on everything. Maybe I should go live in the countryside, and feed cows.....”

“Do you think running a dairy farm is easy? The Demon King may overlook such arrogance, but I won’t overlook it!”

“What do you think running a dairy farm involves! What type of fantasy are you caught up in!?”

Silpennon was the only one in a peaceful state amongst all of them.

“What is wrong with being a thief? I don’t feel too bad about it.”

Crown prince was a position that allowed him to possess absolute authority, but at the same time, it was a shackle that he couldn’t escape from. When his father the king was killed, he had run away from his uncle’s evil influence, and he had reached this point. Silpennon kind of liked the view of the world from where he stood right now.

“I’m not in a position where I’m completely happy with the situation, but..... Yes, I’m Silpennon the thief now. Hoo. It isn’t too bad. Moreover, I had always yearned to get out of my birdcage. It feels as if I’ve grabbed freedom by the hand.”

Silpennon kept smiling as he observed good manners towards Artpe again.

“If it wasn’t for you, I don’t know what would have happened to me. The fact that I followed after you might be the best decision I’ve made in my life. Thank you, Artpe.”

“The hard part will start from now on. If you thank me so early, I’ll feel guilty.”

“You really are the type of person that can’t accept a thanks without making a fuss...”

All Four Heavenly Kings of the Demon King’s army were like that. If they were transparent about their feelings, they would meet their end before they could even start. Ah, this also made it hard for them to return the feelings of others.

“Huh? Silpennon, Silpennon.....”

At that moment, Mycenae suddenly tilted her head in puzzlement as she looked at them. The name made her think of a hot issue right now. It happened when she was having this thought.

Silpennon didn’t hesitate. He nodded his head.

“That’s right. I used to be the crown prince of Diaz.”

“Your highness, you shouldn’t tell her that!”

Did he decide it was information that he didn’t need to hide? Or was he just too young? Of course, a Dungeon Merchant didn’t go around blabbing about information regarding a customer. Still, it wasn’t wise to reveal such information unnecessarily.

However, Silpennon was already well aware of this fact. He wasn't an idiot.

"However, I'm not anymore."

Silpennon looked back with a refreshed expression on his face. He wanted to accept his current self, so he planned on making a clean break from his past.

"So stop call me by that title, Leseti. I'm only a level 49 thief Silpennon now. I plan on burying my position as the crown prince in the darkness until we defeat the Demon King. That is why I don't care, who finds out about it. No one will be able to find the crown prince Silpennon."

Mycenae's eyes became round.

"Oh my. So that's how it is. Somehow, I did feel an air of nobility coming from you. Wait a second. Did my little customers already have a connection to the throne....."

As her imaginations started to stretch far and wide, Artpe extended his finger to wrap the end of the Mana String into a ball. He tapped it against Mycenae's smooth forehead.

"Ah-yaht!"

"If you act so clingy, you won't be popular with men, ajumma."

"Koooh... Whatever you may take me for, before I became a merchant, men lined up just to be able to catch my eyes! There were enough of them to encircle the central square ten times! Customer, you are the only one that doesn't recognize my charm! This is the problem with kids!"

Artpe completely ignored Mycenae's grumblings as he gathered all the loot.

It was hard to express this in words. It was merely a Slime Dungeon, yet the items and rewards gathered there was too amazing. Of course, a part of the reason was the fact that they were the first to discover this Dungeon. Moreover, all the secret locations had been revealed. On top of that, the artifacts were all gathered in a single place by the Huge Slime. It all came out from its body.

The items that possessed weak magical energy were dissolved into pure magical energy within the Huge Slime. The magical energy either strengthened the Huge Slime or it strengthened the other items.

Of course, the remaining items would go up in value.

“There’s a lot this time around. Did you completely clean out the whole Dungeon?”

“Yes. It is as you say. Let’s see..... I want 653 gold for all the minor items. Call?”

“Mmm... Call.”

“All right.”

Both sides already knew that the other was a master. This was why the transaction between Artpe and Mycenae didn’t take long.

Of course, the worth of the items was assessed and the transaction ended. It happened way too fast. The rest of the party looked on in disbelief. They looked at Artpe and Mycenae as if they were some kind of monsters.

Artpe handed over all the loot to Mycenae, but he held back several artifacts. It was time for them to earnestly evaluate the worth of the artifacts. Mycenae gulped.

“In truth, the items I really want you to sell me are those.....”

“Let me think about it.”

In truth, Artpe had wished for more Skill Books to come out, but it ended at the Mana Control. Even the common Fire Magic Spell Book hadn’t dropped. Instead, there were rare items that were as rare as the Huge Slime.

“Let’s talk about this potion first.”

[Slime Potion]

[All forms of liquid will be made into slime. If someone with low resistance to Mana drinks it, one will die immediately as one’s blood would be turned into slime. It is a very rare and foul substance. It doesn’t emit hostile Mana, so it is perfect to use for assassination. Only a Slime that has evolved to the extreme may produce it at a low probability. This item has almost never been seen before within history.]

“.....mmmm?”

“What is that potion, customer? What is it? It is bothering me!”

“This... I’ll keep it for now.”

He had no idea where he should use this. However, strange and useless items like this usually helped out at crucial moments.

“Aht. You should give me an explanation on what it is... Ooh-eeeeee”

Mycenae's cheeks puffed out when Artpe put away the potion without giving an explanation. Of course, he wasn't into older women, so he ignored the rest of her words. He took out the second loot.

It looked as if it was an item that was crafted by using a part of the Huge Slime's body. It was a longbow that didn't look too sturdy.

[Flexible Hunter's Bow]

[The shape will change depending on the user's objective. It can change from a short bow to a ballista. Mana will be consumed to make a Mana Arrow. Its power will depend on the user's Archery level. Users without Archery level of 100 cannot use it. It is possible to increase durability of the item by injecting Mana.]

After he checked the information regarding the Artifact, Artpe couldn't hold back his words. He tackled the issue that was bothering him.

“Ballista should not be classified as a bow!?”

“Pull yourself together, customer! That isn't a ballista. It is a longbow!?”

Artpe activated his Read All Creation ability again, and he checked each component of the bow. He injected some of his power to check if the bow could change into a short bow and a ballista.

Of course, the requirement to use the bow was to be an archer of high rank Class, but Artpe was a hero. He could easily brush aside such restrictions.

“Huhk. It really is a ballista!?”

“This is better than expected.....”

Artpe ignored the shocked Mycenae. He calmly retreated. He turned around to look at Maetel, and he asked her a question.

“Do you have any thoughts about using a bow, Maetel?”

“It looks fun to use, but I’m not confident that I can handle anything that isn’t a club or a sword. That is why I don’t want it.”

“You made a good decision.”

She was talented enough to pick up any weapon, and she would be able to use it well enough to be comparable to the people of the same Class. However, if she learned too many things, she might regret it someday. She was most suited to close combat. She should focus on what she was best at.

“Customer, I will.....”

“I want 1,650 gold. Do you want to buy it?”

“Ooh-mmmmm. If I can find the proper owner, I’m confident I can charge twice that price, but.....”

“You do know there is a scarce supply of this type of artifacts in the world, right?”

Artpe had a fair point. It was a bow that could change form to fit the situation!

It can be used from short range to very long distance. Moreover, there was no need to carry around arrows, and the durability could be recovered. If Artpe was an archer, he would have kept it. It would have been a no brainer.

“A right owner... A right owner...”

Mycenae thought over it for a very long time. This was a huge transaction, so she would have to invest a lot into this venture. This was why she was a bit hesitant. Artpe coaxed her to allay her concerns.

“I have to buy a lot from you this time around.”

“.....hoo-ooh. I’ll buy it for 1650 gold.”

This was how over 1,500 gold was exchanged in a single transaction. Silpennon was a crown prince of a nation, yet even his mouth fell open at the sight.

“Are adventurers the type of occupation where one makes a lucrative amount of money?”

“Of course, if all adventurers could find a jackpot of a Dungeon like these little customers, they could earn as much. Unfortunately, 70% of all adventurers fail to find anything. Then about 20% of the adventurers covet the treasures, but they retreat when faced with danger. Nine percent of the adventurers bravely charge forward and they are killed.”

“So that means only 1% of them are able to get what they want?”

“Moreover, if the 1% challenges another Dungeon, they’ll be back in the roulette with 1% chance of succeeding.”

Opportunity always come hand in hand with risk. However, one shouldn’t be delusional about the order in which it was faced. If opportunity exists within danger, the idiots always died first.

“...I will take those words to heart.”

“Well, if one observe these customers, it does make one wonder if those statistics are wrong!”

After Mycenae delivered the warning with a serious voice, she undercut her own words as she turned around. She looked at the last loot left behind by the Huge Slime...

“The last thing left is the chest plate. Its durability and Mana reaction seems to be uncommon.....”

However, before the sensor for Mycenae's worldly desires could activate, Artpe handed the armor to Maetel.

“Maetel.”

“Yes, thank you!”

“Why don’t you two just hurry up and marry?!”

It was called a Blast Plate. It was an armor that only protected the body from the front.

It had a red sheen, and at a glance, one could tell it was something extraordinary. It had the option of protecting its owner from a critical blow, and a fixed amount of Mana was consumed to blunt the effects of an attack. The options were perfect for a defensive gear.

The cherry on top was that it had a similar option to the Bone Gauntlet. It could raise the user's strength by detecting its owner's emotions. It was the perfect armor for Maetel, who used Berserk. Since it had an emotion type buff on it, it was the emotion felt by the Huge Slime right before it perished. However, such information could be omitted.

"Hue hue. The red light is too pretty."

"Ah. I think there are more customers that will look for that instead of the bow....."

Maetel was happy, and Mycenae was wistful. Leseti, who didn't have any claims to the artifact, could only look on as she smacked her lips.

It was as if he didn't care what they were feeling. Artpe suddenly sat on the floor, and his eyes let out a harsh light. It was as if the main fight was yet to come! That was what his expression indicated.

"Sit next to me, Maetel."

"Yes!"

Maetel, who didn't know what was going on, sat next to Artpe, and her eyes shone too. The bizarreness of the situation doubled.

Artpe spoke in a solemn manner towards the puzzled Mycenae.

"I told you I have a lot to buy this time around, ajumma."

"I'm not an ajumma. However, you clearly did say that."

"Hoo....."

Artpe shut his eyes tight. There were a lot of thoughts going through his head as he

was about to spend an enormous amount of money.

Should he do it right now? Should he? He needed money for many things in the future, so should he make such an expenditure at this point in time?

However, he didn't know when he'll be able to see the Dungeon Merchant again. It would be hard to find a suitable location such as this.....

"All right."

"I'll be embarrassing if you suddenly confess to me."

Artpe replied to Mycenae's remark, which had been made in humor.

"I want you to give me all the Skill Books that can be learned by a level 150 Warrior and a level 150 Magician."

"....."

Artpe did the only thing that the palace did right in developing the hero. Basically, he started on the task of turning money into ability.

Chapter 32

Dungeon, Evolution and Success (6)

In truth, Artpe wanted to purchase all the close combat Skill Books and Spell Books affiliated with the magician Class.

If he did that, he would basically reveal to everyone that Artpe and Maetel were heroes. Moreover, he didn't have enough money to purchase all of them. Currently, this was the best Artpe could do.

"Ooh-wah. You are doing something only a noble family would do."

Yet it was enough to make Mycenae feel overwhelmed. She searched through her cargo to bring out all the Skill Books and Spell Books she possessed. She couldn't hold back her bitter laughter. Artpe appraised each one of them, and he explained to Maetel on the use of these books.

"This is one of the psychotic things that monsters, beings from other races and humans fight each other for. It is something they do in an attempt to live a little bit longer. This is the most legal and safe form of doping. It is one of the very few cheat keys allowed in this world. There is only one thing we have to give up in return."

Artpe grinned as gold coins poured out of the pouch held out by Mycenae.

"Money."

"If one's ability is lacking, this strategy won't work. A sloppily-learned skill would only lead to tears later... Well, I'm pretty sure you guys will be fine."

Mycenae hadn't seen them fight, but she had a decent idea on how talented they were. They had the luck of finding great rewards in any Dungeon they went to. Even if one put aside their luck, they were unperturbed after doing a full clear of the Dungeon. Just this fact was very telling.

"Still, haven't you learned most of the basic Skills? This means your Stats will go up slightly. You won't benefit much from them."

“This allows one to buy one’s life with money.....”

“Yes. Yes. The fact that you treasure your life is a very admirable trait.”

The Skill Books were expensive. The most basic and useless ones were worth several dozen silvers. A basic Skill Book was around 1 gold, so one could only imagine how expensive a Skill Book would be if it was useful in battle. Maetel counted the Skill Books as they were handed over to Artpe.

“Only 14..... Moreover, I’ve already learned 8 of them! So how much are these, Artpe?”

“It’s 619 gold. Of course, there are some that are only worth couple golds, but there are also ones that are worth several dozen golds. Normally a Skill Book jumps several dozen times in value if it becomes known that it is a bit useful.”

“A book costs several dozen gold!”

“Didn’t you just hear that Mana Control was worth 350 gold?”

Maetel really didn’t like the fact that she would have to learn a Skill Book when she already knew the Skill. She would be doing such an act in an attempt to marginally grow her Stats. However, Artpe had provided all of this with her in thought, so she couldn’t just spurn the gesture. She had no choice, but to learn it all.

“Hoo-ooooh.....”

“As expected, you aren’t an ordinary talent. You were able to learn and get used to the Skills in an instant...”

“For the love of god, you are using those expensive Skill Books in one sitting!”

“That’s the part that surprises you, Leseti?”

There was an upside in learning all the Skills at once. Each of Maetel’s stamina, agility and strength rose by 10. Normally, one’s Stat rose by three in total when a warrior leveled up. This meant she had gained Stats equivalent to increasing 10 levels.

Of course, a level up didn’t only give Stats, so it was impossible to do a one on one comparison. Still, if one was in a situation where one’s death was assured, a difference in 30 Stat points might be enough to allow one to survive the situation. Moreover, if it

was Maetel, she would be much more efficient in using the increase in Stats.

“So this is how adventurers arm themselves.”

“I told you it isn’t like that. There aren’t that many adventurers, who are blessed with such an environment!”

“Koohk. If I had that much support, I would be stronger…….”

“Leseti, it must have been hard on you…….”

Anyways, the purchase of the Skill Books ended without any hitch.

The problem was the Spell Books.

“There are only 9 Spell Books!? Artpe, this is a scam!”

“All of them combined are worth 608 gold? Still, you were able to prepare quite a lot of them for me.”

“As expected, you know your stuff!”

The Skill Book prices looked inflated, but the pricing was weak compared to the Spell Books. There were only a very small number of magic type Classes in existence. Naturally, the number of spell books were proportionately low in number. There weren’t a lot of them out there.

This was why it wasn’t easy to purchase a spell he wanted. The limitation of the supply was hard to overcome. It was as Artpe had said. It was almost a miracle that Mycenae possessed so many Spell Books.

“You should feel fortunate in the fact that you were able to meet me. Even most magician towers don’t release this amount of material.”

“Half of these magic are for everyday chores, so stop trying to stump for yourself.”

Artpe snorted as he learned the Spells at once. These were spells useful for everyday life, and it was considered to be on the lower rung in terms of difficulty. Still, it normally took several tries to learn it. However, Artpe was the possessor of the Read All Creation ability. He could learn the Spell Books just by holding it in his hand.

“Ho-ooh. It rose around 23 magical energy.....? That’s not too bad.”

The value highlighted the fact that Hyper Rubbing was a high rank magic spell. When Artpe learned Hyper Rubbing, his magical energy went up by 20. He had learned nine magic spells, yet his magic energy rose by 23!

“You are understating it by saying it wasn’t too bad! Do you realize how monstrous of a feat you just accomplished!?”

“Hoong. If I didn’t have the ability to back it up, why would I ask for all your Spell Books?”

Artpe finished the task as if it was nothing, but Mycenae, who was watching the sight, couldn’t hide her shock. When one learned many magic spells at one, the theory behind the magic spells clashed, and there was a chance one might become a vegetable! So how was he able to do so!

This wasn’t something that could be done, because one was good at controlling Mana. One needed an incredible amount of memorization and computation skills to achieve what he had accomplished!

“Customer.”

Mycenae extended her hands. They moved like lightning as she grabbed one of Artpe’s hand. Her eyes shone. Maetel growled from behind, but Mycenae didn’t pay attention to her. She spoke with sincerity as she tried to convince him.

“Do you have any desire to use your talent in the marketplace!?”

“Nope.”

“Chet.”

After Artpe firmly rebuffed Mycenae’s entreaty, he put his mind into motion. He had spent around 1,200 gold in purchasing the Skills and Spells. In truth, he had prepared himself to spend up to 2,000 gold, so he had a good amount of money left.

He thought about purchasing more potions, yet they still had plenty of consumables. Next, he thought about equipment, but they didn’t really need a particular piece of equipment right now.

“Mmm..... Ughh.”

Artpe thought a little bit more on it. Then he asked a question to Mycenae with a slightly lowered voice.

“Do you have artifacts that can hinder perception? If possible, I want you to give me a good one.”

“Hoooooog?”

Mycenae’s expression turned sly. She didn’t ask any further questions. She just took out two rings. They weren’t fancy. The two rings looked to be made out of discolored gold. She held the rings out in her hand, and she had a triumphant expression on her face.

“As it happen, I have two highest quality artifacts left! It is in the form of a ring so it is easy to hide, and its outward appearance can go through minor changes. Moreover, these were made by a high rank magician, so there’s no way you’ll be detected by anyone under level 250.....”

“All right. I’ll buy it for 500 gold each. What do you say to 1,000 gold?”

“You aren’t allowing me the opportunity to barter.”

Artpe put one of the rings worth 500 gold on his finger. He gave the other one to Maetel.

“I’ll tell you how to use the artifact later. Just put it on for now.”

“F... five hundred gold... For 500 gold... How many cows is that? I don’t know!”

Maetel was in a deep state of turmoil, but in the end, she put on the ring. She wrapped her hand around the finger with the ring on it as if it was something to be treasured. Her cheeks had turned red. It was clear that she had mistook the gesture for something else. However, nothing bad would come from her treasuring the ring. Artpe smirked as he turned his head...

“I want two artifacts that hinder the perception of others! Give it to me!”

Even if he threw away his rank as the crown prince, he couldn’t lose his face. Silpennon

clung to Mycenae as if he had found a road to his salvation.

As expected, the guy was pretty smart. Silpennon was in the same situation as Artpe and Maetel where he had to hide his existence by using the item to avoid detection.

“But, your highness..... No, that isn’t right. Silpennon-nim, the woman clearly said that those were her last two.....”

“I don’t care if it doesn’t perform as well! You must have others!”

“Uh, oh my! Come to think of it, I have exactly two more left!”

“.....”

The party members stared at her with cold gazes. Mycenae acted shameless by whistling under their cold gazes. This was called iron face in the vocabulary of the merchants. It was clear that she was a master of this highest rank technique As expected of a veteran merchant!

“Hoo. Just give it to me.”

If that was how merchants had to act, he never wanted to become a merchant. Silpennon took out a thousand gold. The money he brought out from the palace wasn’t unlimited. Still, he couldn’t skimp on money when it came to preserving his own life.

“You won’t regret this trade!”

“Do you perhaps have 11 of the same item still left in your possession?”

“The part about its efficacy was real. You can trust me on that part. Ooh-cha.”

Artpe let out a sigh as he got up.

He sold what he had to sell, and he bought what he had purchase. The trade was done.

However, there was still a deal to be made for the others.

“Ajumma, I have work where you’ll have to travel.”

“Oh my. Are you asking me out on a date? In truth, it isn’t as if I don’t like you, but you

should make the request after growing up for five years, at the very least.”

“As part of your job as a merchant, don’t you offer a service to teach beginner adventurers? I want you to teach them about the basic common sense of being an adventurer.”

Silpennon and Leseti had been divvying up the rings amongst themselves, and they hadn’t expected the spark to fly towards them. They blinked their eyes. A lesson for beginner adventurers? Such a thing existed?

“You completely ignored my words! Kook... All right. I’ll do it!”

Mycenae acted as if she had been humiliated, but she quickly transitioned into her business mode. In such a situation, her battle capability and bargaining power increased by 20%! She patted her ample breast as she boasted about herself.

“You already know this, right? I’m a veteran trader. Normally, I don’t take on such simple jobs. This should be obvious, but my pay is pretty high.”

“However, you will apply a proper 30% discount there, right?”

“Koohk!”

She knew she couldn’t win against him, yet she stalled for time. She had a personality befitting the weakest amongst the Four Heavenly Kings. Artpe thought Mycenae would have done well as one of the Four Heavenly Kings instead of being a merchant.

Artpe spoke to Silpennon.

“Since I’ve helped you up to this point, the rest is up to you now. Originally, I brought you guys to the Dungeon with the intention of letting you guys meet the Dungeon Merchant. It is good for beginner adventurers like you guys to have a good rapport with the Dungeon Merchants.”

“If we go by age, you guys could be considered beginner adventurers.....”

Silpennon was dismayed, so he mumbled those words to himself. Still, he intended to take full advantage of the stage provided by Artpe. Since Artpe insisted on this, he’ll acquire all the information he could from the Dungeon Merchant!

“Ughh. The price changes depending on time. However, if a 30% discount is applied again.....”

“It is time for us to go.”

“Yes!”

“What!?”

Silepennon and Leseti were on their best behavior as they were about to get ready for the lesson. They turned to look at Artpe in surprise.

“Are you going to abandon us?!”

“It is as I’ve promised. We finished the Dungeon together. I increased your level and skills. I’ve even arranged for you to receive an education as an adventurer. What more do you want?”

“B... but.....”

Silpennon and Lesti stared at Artpe. Both their eyes shook. They looked at him as if he was a lover that was leaving them, and in truth, he did feel a little bit bad about this.

“I want to repay my debts, yet I won’t have any way to find you in the future.”

“When S... Silpennon-nim passes away, I planned on putting myself in your care! Are you trying to make me a wandering knight?”

“What the hell? Who’s going to pass away?”

The man and woman fought as if their relationship as master and servant would end soon. Mycenae stared at Artpe as she spoke in a small voice.

“You must love it since you are so popular, customer.”

“You are being noisy. Shut up. Just sell me the communication device.”

“You really provided everything for them even as you gripe. You are so cute that I can’t help myself! Fifty eight gol.....”

“If we apply the 30% discount, it will be 40 gold, right?”

“Goo-ooooooooohk!”

One’s intentions didn’t matter. It was also the fate of the hero to be blindly loved by the people around him. Artpe was still unaware of this fact.

Chapter 33

Come to Think of It, I'm a Hero (1)

Artpe and Maetel left the three people behind as they exited the Dungeon. Of course, he wasn't able to completely shed his worry about Silpennon's future. However, if Silpennon died after he did this much for him, it was just fate!

"So, Artpe, where are we headed now?"

"Originally, I wanted us to go into some decent Dungeons to grow our levels, but....."

They had entered the Dungeon to grow Silpennon to a respectable level. However, a Huge Slime had appeared, and it allowed Artpe to become level 163. Maetel had grown to level 174. He hadn't intended for this, yet their levels had increased explosively. They didn't really intend for this to happen, yet they had experienced a tempest of growth. They really didn't need to go searching for a different Dungeon as of now. As expected, the power of a hero was amazing!

Somehow, Maetel looked wistful at his words.

"So we aren't going to any more Dungeons? I thought the Dungeons were really fun. I love becoming stronger!"

Even if she wasn't a hero, he surmised she would have become the strongest in the world no matter what her Class was. While he had this distant thought, he soon let out a bitter laugh as he consoled her.

"There will come a day when you'll have to basically live inside Dungeons even if you don't want to. That is why you should be patient for now. At the very least, we won't be pushed around at this level."

In the demon world, it was hard for beings under level 200 to strut around in the Demon world, but they were in the human world. The grand master of this kingdom had barely exceeded level 200, yet the world praised his name. No one will be able to restrain them in such a world.

On top of that, they possessed the Record Link, and Maetel's various skills had grown significantly. If the specialness of being a hero was added, he wondered if any being under level 200 would be able to face her.

In a world where level was the absolute indicator of one's strength, the fact that she could jump over this demarcation was an amazing talent.

"However, if we meet anyone above that level, we have to run away. The high rank Class over level 200 differ in quality."

"Wasn't the Slime we just caught over level 200?"

"That one is an exception. It is like the weakest amongst the four Heavenly Kings. He is frequently excluded from being listed amongst the ranks of the strongest beings."

It didn't matter how far it had evolved. In the end, the Slime suffered an ignominious death even after it ate all the Mana in its vicinity to become huge.

This was the reason why Artpe had been relaxed even as the Slime ate an entire Dungeon. It wouldn't have mattered if it evolved using 10 or 100 floors. He would have left it alone. He would have considered it a great opportunity to completely refine the Demite's Gemstone.

"As expected, Artpe is amazing?"

"You always come to that conclusion."

"Hoo-hoo-hoong."

It looked as if Maetel was very happy that she was alone with Artpe again.

Artpe was slowly getting used to her endless affection and skinship. However, he worried she would get sick of him some day. A person's feeling was one of the most powerful motivators, but emotions were temporary and fickle. It wasn't something that was easy to deal with.

'It isn't as if I want to detain the hero. However, if she stops following my directions before we kill the Demon King, it'll be a problem. Maybe, I can use Charm magic... No, that plan is impossible if her resistance to Mana is put into consideration... Tsk. Yes, I have to admit it to myself. I wouldn't like myself if I did that to her.'

He tried hard to think like the bad guy, but in the end, he let out a sigh. Yes, he really hated messing with another being's free will. From the time he was enslaved by the Demon King, he had suffered under the same treatment. He knew how shitty something like that was.

What if he did that to a hero? Even if god could forgive him, Artpe wouldn't be able to forgive himself.

'Moreover, if I am to be a little bit more honest with myself, I.....'

Artpe had been trying very hard not to have these thoughts until now, yet he attempted to confront his inner feelings... His face suddenly turned red, and he stopped that train of thought.

When he stopped the thought process, the scene from his past life flashed through his mind. It was the sight of the dependable and pure hero's face, who had faced him in front of the Demon King's castle.

".....Artpe, what's wrong? Are you in pain?"

"Nope. It's nothing. Hey, your face is too close. Move it. Hey."

"I don't want to! I want to hold your hand!"

Her timing was uncanny as she pushed her face towards Artpe. Artpe was startled, so he tried to push her away. However, there was no way Artpe could win in terms of strength.

In the end, Artpe had to do what Maetel wanted. She gained ownership of Artpe's arm. She energetically swung their arms as if they were little children going on a picnic.

"I really love the fact that we are walking together! Just the two of us!"

"You'll be sick of it soon."

"I'll never be sick of it. Not even in a thousand years!"

"The scale you think in is like that of a dragon's"

In the end, Artpe had to laugh at Maetel's innocent reply.

Then he spoke to her in a kind voice.

“Let's go recruit a new member for the hero's party.”

“Eeeesh-eeeeng!”

As soon as she expressed her pleasure at being alone with him, Artpe immediately declared his intention of adding a new member! This savagery was an aspect that was befitting one of Four Heavenly Kings of the Demon King's army!

In his past life, the Diaz Kingdom had been held together quite easily. It wasn't as if there wasn't a rebellion caused by the Archduke, but the hero was able to suppress it easily.

Diaz had been peaceful thanks to the hero, and they were able to prosper. This was all before the full-out war with the Demon King's army had started.

‘However, it isn't like that anymore.’

Artpe sighed when they arrived at the first town, since they had left the Slime Dungeon. The town was quite dreary. Maetel, who had expected a bustle of people, was taken aback at the frozen atmosphere of the town.

“What's wrong with this place, Artpe?”

“It is said that when a ruler clears his throat, the citizens would suffer. With that in mind, the country just went through a change in ownership. Of course, the whole country will be in tumult.”

In some ways, this was the biggest change that had occurred, because of Artpe. If Artpe hadn't run away with the hero, this rebellion would have never occurred.

If the agitated Maetel, who was next to Artpe, was still inside the castle, the humans that sought to satisfy their own selfish interests and desires wouldn't have been able to take control.

Still, it was as Silpennon had said. This occurred because of the internal politics of the kingdom. This wasn't Maetel's fault. Of course, Artpe wasn't at fault either. This was why they didn't need to feel any guilt.

‘Still, this does annoy me a little bit.’

Artpe let out a sigh as he looked at Maetel, who looked a bit sad. He placed a hand atop her head.

“We shouldn’t worry ourselves over all of this. We just have to do what is within our power, and we have to defeat our final foe, the Demon King.”

“Will everyone become happy when we defeat the Demon King?”

In the old tales, the world became peaceful when the hero defeated the Demon King. Of course, these were only old tales. Artpe’s view was grounded in reality.

“No. However, if the Demon world loses its leader, people will rush towards the Demon world to conquer it. For a brief time, there would be a need for manpower, and even civilians with no abilities would have a chance to get their hands on a good amount of loot. Of course, it also depends on the ability of humans to defend their newly found peace.”

“The Demon world.....? What about the Demons in the Demon world?”

She was astute in the questions she asked. For an instant, Artpe thought about his previous life where the Demon King had subjugated their entire Demon race. He thought about himself..... In the end, he shook his head from side to side.

“You don’t have to worry about the Demon race. We just have to kill them all.”

“Everyone said that Demons are bad, but..... There are bad people amongst humans, so wouldn’t there also be kind Demons in the Demon race?”

“.....”

Artpe shut his mouth at the unexpected question. Her eyes did not falter. She stared at Artpe with sincere eyes. This was why he was hesitant to give her a rash answer.

“That’s.....”

In the human world, everyone grew up being educated that ‘Humans are good and the Demons are bad.’

The power of indoctrination was scary. Even those that were learned and experienced in the world held absolute hostility towards the Demon race.

‘However, she came to hate the humans first.’

To be precise, the humans that tried to kill Artpe, and it was apt to say that her faucet was turned the wrong way. Afterwards, Maetel was able to willingly swing her sword against humans.

In truth, Artpe had worried a lot about this fact. He worried her nature would move closer to being that of a Berserker.

However, he just learned that he was the standard she was using to determine what was good and what was bad. This was why he decided not to interfere in determining what was right and wrong for her. He wouldn’t do so even if the topic was about humans and the Demons.

‘I wonder if she’ll start to hesitate when killing monsters in the future.’

In the end, Artpe let out a bitter laugh as he lightly patted her head.

She was still only 13 years old. This was a question where even Artpe hadn’t been able to come up with an answer. Nothing good will come from her worrying over such a question.

“I already told you the standard of judgement you should use. You do what you think is right. That is all there is to it. Don’t try to take on too big of a problem. You should deal with what is immediately in front of you, and it will all work out in the future”

“.....yes, all right. For now, I want to do what you want to do.”

Artpe’s answer was a non-answer. However, she didn’t want to admit to herself that Artpe was lacking in any aspect. This was why she decided to accept what Artpe said as an absolute truth.

She decided to pretend that it was enough.

“But... But what if Artpe.....”

However, there was one question remaining that she needed answered.

“What happens if the Demon King is one the the good demons?”

“Ah, you don’t have to worry about that.”

Fortunately, this was a question where he could give a definite answer. Artpe’s eyes narrowed as he spoke in a firm manner.

“If the Demon king is considered to be kind, that would mean no evil would exist in this world.”

“I understand. I’ll trust you, Artpe!”

This was how the Q&A session between the two heroes ended. He was sure a day would come when he would come across this question again, but this was enough for now.

The two had a serious conversation that was unbecoming of young kids as they entered the town. Sure enough, the town was being searched by soldiers sent by the palace.

“Have you seen him before! He’s a youth with red hair! Red hair!”

“We are looking for a black haired brat, and a blonde haired girl. Are you perhaps hiding them in your home? Huh?”

Rough looking soldiers were searching each house. There was a reason why the town wasn’t lively at all.

The soldiers weren’t just searching for the crown prince. They were also trying to find the missing heroes from a year ago. When she realized this fact, Maetel was a bit frightened. She stuck close to Artpe, but he was completely relaxed.

“The artifact that obstruct recognition is working perfectly, so we’ll be fine.”

“Still, I’m worried.....”

The two of them were using artifacts that obstructed recognition, so it looked as if they possessed brown hair and dark brown eyes. These were the most common color amongst the population, and they looked very average. If they were still detained even though they weren’t heroes, they could just kill that person on the grounds that he was a pedophile.

“Hey, you guys over there! Come here and show me your faces!”

“Of course, there are occasionally bastards like him.....”

There were people, who became violent, when they were placed in a position of power. It wasn't just about one's voice becoming louder. This was especially true when faced with young children, who looked weak.

“What did you say?”

Of course, the solution was simple. He just had to put them in their place.

“Hee... heek.”

Artpe took off his robe to reveal his changed brown hair, then he floated two fireballs into the air. The overbearing soldier, who had been shouting towards them, froze in place.

“You are being too noisy. I don't care who you are looking for. Shut up. You should go on about quietly. All right?”

“A m... mage.....!”

The soldier couldn't reply properly. His gaze was firmly planted on the fireballs, which were moving around freely based on the gesture of Artpe's hand. The nearby soldiers had already retreated.

“Hey. Aren't you going to answer me?”

When Artpe glared as he moved the fireballs, the soldier finally bowed his head in surprise.

“I..... I'm sorry, mage!”

“If you feel that way then get the hell out of my sight. From this moment on, if I see any of you, you won't need a hearth to feel warm ever again.”

“Yes. Yes, sir!”

The one that gave the answer as well as the demoralized soldiers exited the town at

once. It was as if there was a flash flood. Artpe gave a light laugh as he turned to look at Maetel.

“You just have to simply show them your power against idiots like them. This is the easiest way to resolve the problem for both sides, so you should remember this.”

“Oooh. Artpe is too cool.....!”

There were stars in Maetel’s eyes.

Mmm. It seemed Artpe’s message hadn’t taken hold at all.

“What’s so cool about such a cheap threat?”

“I said Artpe looked cool, because you looked cool. I just said what I thought!”

“Yes. Yes. I was the foolish one.”

Artpe let out a sigh as he turned around. Since he chased the annoying flies away, he had to acquire a place to stay for the night.

Artpe only realized afterwards that he had made a mistake in his calculations.

“Heek ”

“H... hide!”

“Should we run away?”

“P... please spare me!”

“.....”

It seemed the townspeople had become frightened alongside the soldiers. No one wanted to open their doors to the party with the scary magician.

“Ah.....”

It took them 30 minutes. Artpe was barely able to book a room at the inn. As he was served soup, he decided not to use magic in front of the civilians if he could help it.

“We’ll be on a tight schedule starting tomorrow. We won’t be resting until we get to our destination, so you should be prepared for it.”

“When you say a comrade, who are you trying to find?”

“That is.....”

The hero from his past life had undergone countless trial and error to find her companions. She started off with a thief, then she joined forces with a warrior, archer and a priestess.....

However, there was a problem with the party’s firepower. Aside from the priestess, all the members of the hero’s party were powerful beings that had the power of hundred to a thousand men. Yet they weren’t talented enough to turn the tide of a battle by themselves. They were only deployed in situations where a small elite force was effective.

However, the situation had completely changed when a magician joined the hero’s party. The magician possessed such brilliant talent that she was considered second only to the hero! The magician’s ability was so great that the achievement of the hero’s party was separated depending on what happened before and after the magician joined the party.

Since Artpe had the knowledge about his previous life, his choice was obvious.

“We are going to find a mage”

Artpe didn’t care if their positions overlapped. Not, this was actually better! If a magician joined the party early, he could develop her. If he did a good job, maybe he could end all of this, while not having to enter the battlefield!

“I just need Artpe.....”

Maetel grumbled as if she still didn’t like the idea, but he ignored her.

At this point in time, he already knew where he could find the magician.

They just have to go see her now!

At that moment, someone knocked on the door to their room.

“E... excuse me. May I bother you for a brief moment...?”

A thin and high voice of a girl was heard. Maetel answered yes, and she didn't hesitate to answer the door. When the door was opened, a very plain looking girl was standing there. She looked like the Village Girl A that could be found in any town.

“Uh..... Ah.....”

When Artpe caught sight of her, he immediately activate his Read All Creation ability.

At that moment, Artpe finally realized something.

The job as a hero had just started.

Chapter 34

Come to Think of It, I'm a Hero (2)

"M... my name is Aena."

"That's enough with your self-introduction."

Artpe stopped his face from crumpling when he saw the face of the girl. He brushed aside her words.

"I want you to tell me your request, and what you will be able to give me. Keep it short."

"....."

It was said from the olden times that it was crucial to clear a Quest as soon as possible! He just needed to know the content of the Quest and the reward. He didn't care about minor details like her situation.

"Heek."

"Artpe....."

The girl, who came looking for them, and Maetel, who had been looking at Aena, turned to look at Artpe with dumbfounded expressions when they heard his words. Aena was barely able to open her mouth before Artpe's expression could crumple.

"I... in truth, the soldiers came to our town couple days ago. He was captured by them, and he hasn't been returned....."

"All right. What's the reward?"

"....."

He even skipped the content of the Quest! If others heard his words, they might have been impressed by Artpe's strong desire for obtaining a reward.

However, Artpe's expression was excessively harsh. It wasn't directed at the girl or the quest. His anger seemed to be directed at someone else.

"A r... reward... I don't have anything I can give you....."

The girl looked like she was about to cry. Of course, Artpe knew this even before he heard her words. The girl wore very threadbare clothes, and when he checked with his Read All Creation ability, she didn't possess any items worth having on her body.

Despite this fact, Artpe continued to interrogate her.

"What? You don't even have a single bronze coin?"

"I do have a bronze coin, but that isn't enough....."

Aena's eyes started to fill with tears. However, Artpe ruthlessly pushed his hand out towards her.

"Give it to me."

".....what?"

"I want you to take out the bronze coin."

Aena's expression indicated that she had no idea what was going on, but she took out a bronze coin.

She possessed a very dirty bronze coin. It held very little value to Artpe that he wanted to snort, but it was a very precious and large sum of money for the girl. The money was very important to her.

"H... here....."

Aena thought she had come looking for the wrong people. She thought she was getting ripped off in her time of need. Her eyes were shedding large amount of tears as she placed the bronze coin on top of Artpe's hand. Maetel was very angry as she watched what was going on. She had to scold Artpe! She had to scold him a lot! Artpe that makes a child cry was a bad Artpe!

"Artpe!"

“Be quiet, Maetel. I’m trying to assume the Quest Reward. Usually, not even dogs interrupt that process.

“Y... yes.”

However, Artpe replied as if he had predicted Maetel would become angry. She immediately shut her mouth. She was overwhelmed by Artpe’s attitude. She had no idea what made him so angry from the start, but Artpe was incredibly scary right now..... He also looked a little bit cool.

“Hoo-oo.....”

After he quieted Maetel, he firmly gripped the coin he extorted from the girl. He put the coin away, and after he blinked once, he stood up.

Then he spoke clearly towards the girl.

“All right. I’ve accepted your Quest reward. Your payment in advance was 100%, and your balance is 0%. I will undertake the Quest starting now.”

This was the very first Quest he had accepted in his lifetime.

“What?”

“Our account is all settled now, so we are going to go find your dongsaeng”

“Yes.....?”

Aena blinked her eyes as if she couldn’t believe what she had just heard. However, Artpe didn’t hesitate. He put on his robe.

In truth, he was very sleepy, so he wanted to lie down. However, he could always sleep later. He felt restless right now. It felt as if he wouldn’t be able to take it if he didn’t move right now. This was why he prodded Aena into action in annoyance.

“Why are you standing there doing nothing? I’ve received the reward, so I’m going to do the Quest. Are you deaf?”

“Ah, no. But...!”

“I’m going to go find your dongsaeng starting now. I’ll somehow find a way to track him down, and I’ll return him to your side. Are you sure you want to set this as the condition that will complete the Quest?”

“.....ah. Ah. Ah.”

The girl finally understood what was going on. Until a moment ago, she had thought this young magician was trying to steal her money. However, he was saying he would really find her dongsaeng in return for that coin!

Even after thinking over it, the situation didn’t make any sense to her, so she wondered if he was lying. However, Artpe was looking at her with sincere eyes, so she couldn’t ask him if he was lying to her.

This was why she decided to trust Artpe.

“T... thank you very much! I... I don’t know how I should express my thanks...”

“You can thank me after I find and return your dongsaeng safely to your side. I hope I’m not too late, but.....”

Artpe grinded his teeth as he took in the sight of the girl again. He activated his Read All Creation ability, and her status was revealed to him.

[Aena]

[Level : 1]

[Curse : The process changing into low Class Magic Type Foreign Species 1%]

[Drank water containing Cursed Mana four days ago.]

‘Which son of a bitch did this..... ’

Could a person be turned into a monster? The correct answer was yes. It was easy for corpses in places with negative Mana to come back as zombies or ghouls. Then there were voluntary methods that would allow one to become a Death Knight or a Lich.

Amongst the Curses, there were a decent amount that turned a subject into a monster. Currently, a curse that turned a person into a monster was placed on her. This was the

most representative example of someone violating a human's free will.

He had expressed this sentiment before, but this was the type of nonsense he hated the most.

The sound of his teeth grinding could be heard.

"As expected, Artpe is kind. You always told me 'A person should always be precise in one's calculations!'"

"Nope. My calculations were precise, right?"

"Pi. Liar. Artpe is just embarrassed."

Artpe smirked as he started spouting bullshit towards Maetel.

"Listen well, Maetel. The value of an item is relative. Basically, if I think my calculation is correct, then it is correct."

This was why the Quest Reward was important. If judged in an objective manner, even if something was worth a lot, it wouldn't be worth much to him if it wasn't something he needed. The balance in his calculation would be skewed. It was most definitely a tortuous way of thinking, but it was an absolute rule he followed.

"So what about you, Maetel?"

Artpe tapped his chest. It was the pocket where he put away the bronze coin.

"Is 1 Bronze enough for you as a Quest Reward?"

Maetel looked into Artpe's rage-filled eyes. She wondered why he was so angry. She thought maybe she'll be able to find out the underlying reason if she carried out Aena's request with him.

She always wanted a deeper understanding of Artpe. She was sure this request would move her a step closer to her goal.

If she was able to do so, that was a reward in itself.

".....Yes. It is more than enough."

“All right. We’ll carry out the Quest at the same time.”

The two held hands as they immediately rushed out of the room with Aena in the front. They arrived at a very small hut, and numerous townspeople were crowded inside the hut.

“M... magician-nim. In truth, my son was also.....”

“My d... daughter was captured. Those soldiers took all of the nearby children saying they need to check thoroughly.....!”

“I beg of you, mage-nim. Please! Our children!”

Everyone had similar stories to Aena. When Maetel saw the crowd of people, she wondered why they hadn’t come along with Aena. Why had they remained outside? Maetel had a puzzled expression on her face, but Artpe already had a good grasp of this situation.

Aena was probably sent to them as a representative of the townspeople, who had lost their children. They wanted to make the request, but they were too afraid to meet with Artpe. This was why they had pushed forward the youngest and weakest amongst them to speak to Artpe.

Even amongst the weak, there was always someone that was weaker than the others. This was why people like them always insisted on sacrificing the weakest amongst them. When it looked as if Artpe had accepted the quest, they finally scrambled to meet him.

Artpe spoke firmly towards the townspeople surrounding him.

“I want everything you guys own.”

“W... what? But you only wanted one bronze from Aena...”

“I received her entire net worth. I have to be fair in receiving the Quest Rewards. So are you going to request a Quest from me? Or maybe... Shall I extract the price with my own hands?”

Everyone gathered at the location was struck dumb. They didn’t need to look at Artpe’s twisted smile to know that he was serious about his words.

For some reason, the young mage was very angry right now, and if they were rash in provoking him, their missing children wouldn't be the only problem they would face. The townspeople realized that they might be sent to a place where they would never be able to return from.

"U... understood!"

"We'll bring it!"

Everyone quickly ran into their homes. Artpe spat on the ground as he saw their backs, and he turned to look at Maetel. It looked as if she was still having a hard time completely understanding the situation.

"You would do well to watch this carefully. A crappy hero goes house to house to seize goods. A veteran hero like me makes the townspeople do my work instead."

".....Artpe looks like a really bad guy, but you look so cool that I like it anyways."

Artpe wasn't a veteran hero. He had merely been one of the Four Heavenly Kings in his past life yet he was shit talking in a confident manner. Maetel let out an opinion that was bit strange for a hero to say. When Aena looked at both of them with a dumbfounded expression, Artpe let out a bitter laugh as he asked her a question.

"Do you have any clues as to where your dongsaeng was taken... Of course, you don't."

"Yes. I just know that he was dragged away by the soldiers....."

Aena once again had tears in her eyes as she lowered her head. As if Artpe had expected this, he nodded his head. He easily organized the situation in his head.

This incident began when the heroes were born. The palace tried to acquire them, yet they had failed. This brought instability to the throne. This allowed the Archduke to be successful in his rebellion, and the throne was stolen.

The Archduke probably unleashed all the soldiers in this region to search for the runaway crown prince and the heroes. He might have mobilized all the soldiers inside the country. If he wanted to build a firm foundation for his power, the archduke had to kill the crown prince. If he wanted to gain legitimacy for the throne, he had to procure the heroes.

Artpe could somewhat see the natural flow of events. However, there were two problems that he couldn't explain.

First, the soldiers were capturing all young children to check up on them. Secondly, Aena and maybe other children were being cursed through the drinking water. The curse placed on them would turn them into monsters.

Of course, these two problems might have nothing to do with each other.

The Archduke might be doing a thorough job by gathering all the children. The girl might have been unlucky in having a curse placed on her. The curse might not have anything to do with the other captured children.

'Still, I used to insist everything will go well before I suffered crushing defeats. I had enough of that in my days as one of the Four Heavenly King inside the Demon King's army.'

This was why Artpe decided to assume the worst. It might not just be Aenea or the children of this town. Maybe, all the children in this country were cursed.

He entertained the possibility of the people, who cursed the children, might have ties to the Archduke. They might be acting under his order.

'If we are lucky, it might just be a simple black magician. If we are unlucky, it'll be the Demon king's army. If my past life is any indication, the Demon King didn't use such a full-scale tactic at this point in time.....'

He shouldn't just take it for granted that something won't happen, because it hadn't happened in his past life. No, he had to be more vigilant for that eventuality.

Moreover, the world that had restarted thanks to his high rank ability didn't exactly match up with his previous life. If he domineered over others by clinging to old memories, he might die an ignominious death that was befitting the weakest amongst the Four Heavenly Kings.

'I'll work under the assumption that there is a connection between the Archduke and the Demon King's army. If so, I have a possible motive as to why the Archduke captured all the children of this town. The Demon King's army may have used this opportunity to infect the children with the curse, and they are using the soldiers to collect them...'

What were they planning to do with the children, who were turned into monsters? He didn't even need to ask that question. The general population would fall into chaos, so the Demon King's army would have achieved its goal. Anything that happened afterwards was a bonus.

"That means..."

Artpe looked at Aena, and he thought how unlikely all of this was. If they hadn't come to this town... No, if he hadn't frightened away the soldiers, it would have been Aena's turn to be taken away.

There weren't any cursed children left in the town besides Aena. If she wasn't here, he wouldn't have been so aggressive in jumping into this matter. He wouldn't have budged no matter what anyone would have said to him.

Basically, a small flame he had created at a whim had turned into this Quest.

".....so this is what it like to be a hero."

Artpe shut his eyes as he mumbled to himself.

When he researched the progress of the hero in the past, he had wondered why trouble seemed to follow the hero. Now that he was the person directly involved in the matter, everything was falling into place.

He had no more excuses. Their actions forged the future. It sounded as if he was using circular reasoning... Ah, it couldn't be. He probably wasn't.

At that moment, it became noisy outside. The townspeople had brought their 'entire fortune'

"M... magician-nim! We brought it all! This really is all our fortune!"

"It really is tough to make a living these days, so this is all we have. We are telling you the truth...!"

"Will you really find my child just from receiving this? I feel ashamed to say this is all we have... ·!"

When everyone gathered, Artpe opened his eyes.

He didn't plan on going through all the stuff brought to him by the people. He just wanted to punk them for their disgraceful behaviors. He planned on saving the blameless children from the start.

Of course, he couldn't outwardly express such an attitude.

"You should all give your thanks to Aena. You were too scared to meet me even though your children were captured. If it wasn't for Aena's bravery, I wouldn't have cared if your children died or not."

The townspeople flinched at his venomous words. His words also struck a nerve.

It should be enough to bring them to their senses. He hoped it was so.

"All right. After this, I'll include all of you as clients. I'll return your children... Huh?"

He was indifferently gathering all the 'fortunes' gathered by the townspeople when he saw a black pebble amongst the items. His eyes widened. A village woman flinched, and she spoke as if she was giving an excuse.

"M... my husband found it in the past! It was so pretty that I was hoping it was an expensive gem..... I'm sorry! I'm sorry!"

Artpe firmly shook his head.

"There is no way this is a gem, ajumma."

"I'm sorry! I'm really sorry! Please my son...!"

Artpe had a twisted smile on his lips as he picked it up.

He didn't know if it was fate or inevitability. It might be either, but..... Ah ah. This was quite fun.

"Its outer appearance looks like a gem, but this is something much more important. Rejoice, ajumma."

"What?"

"You saved all the children."

“What!?”

[Obsidian of Greed]

[Rank A]

[A magical stone that sucks in all curses. If it contains a curse, it doesn't differentiate between Mana or a physical object. It absorbs and stores the curse. It can be used as activation ingredient for certain special curse magic. The amount of curse and the quality of curses will determine how much of a boost the magic spell will receive. Currently, the stone is empty.]

Artpe's purple eyes confirmed the true nature of the black stone, and he once again let out a laugh.

He didn't care who was pulling the strings to this plot. The idea of thoroughly crushing all of them made him so happy that he couldn't stop his laughter.

It was the first sortie for the rotten hero.

Chapter 35

Come to Think of It, I'm a Hero (3)

The Obsidian of Greed was originally an item used to gather power of curses. It was an ingredient used when making a more powerful curse.

This was an item for magicians who dealt in curses, and it was something they desperately wanted. It was representative of magic stones that couldn't be made artificially.

'Moreover, this one is Rank A. It means it can store a lot of curses.'

On the other hand, there was an obvious limitation to this item. If an item or a Mana had the property of a curse, it would all be absorbed into the stone. However, it was hard to do anything significant when the curse was already active.

A curse wasn't like placing a load on a person's shoulder. A portion of a person's skin, bones, muscles, brain and heart went through subtle changes. These changes permeated into one's entire being, and the change would become inextricably linked to one's body.

This was why if one was rash in extracting the cursed Mana, the innate Mana within the subject would go on a rampage before killing the subject.

"If so... Come, Aena. I'll deal with you first."

"Y... yes!"

Of course, such limitations didn't apply to Artpe, because he possessed a rare cheat ability called the Read All Creation ability!

If he concentrated, he could get a detailed information on the composition of plants or creatures. So how could extracting cursed Mana from affected regions be difficult for him!

"This might hurt a little bit. Endure it."

“W... what? What did I do.....”

“Endure it.”

“Ah, hoohk!?”

Artpe abruptly placed the Obsidian on Aena’s forehead. Afterwards, Aena’s body started to shake. The townspeople who had been watching this sight immediately stepped back in fright. Of course, Artpe didn’t pay any attention to them.

“I caught it.”

He was able to pinpoint the part of her weak innate magical energy that was being dyed black with the energy of the curse. After a precise extraction, he spoke to her.

“Still, your erodibility was very low, so you didn’t suffer as much.”

“E... erodibility.....?”

Aena was shaking from the pain as she asked him a question. She could immediately guess at what had happened, so her eyes opened wide.

Yes, she was sure her body hadn’t felt normal.

If one felt fine when one was being changed into a monster through a curse, that person would be the incredible one.

“Monster... Modification Curse...? Then my dongsaeng and the other children of the town.....”

“The children were rounded up by them, because of that reason. Of course, they are also the ones who placed the curse on you.”

“Eeeeeeeek.”

The girl bit her lips in anger. A small smile appeared on Artpe’s lips when he saw this. Pain usually transferred into emotion. The curse had progressed to a mere 1%, yet for a brief moment when she raged.....

“All right. You did very well.”

“Ah.”

Artpe stepped back when he saw a slightly darker light within the Obsidian. He checked her with his Read All Creation ability, and not an ounce of curse energy was left behind. Aena blinked her eyes in wonder.

“My body feels light. I thought I had merely been tired and hungry.....”

“Did the unrest in your emotions lessen?”

“.....yes.”

Artpe impishly asked the question when it seemed he already knew the answer. Aena slightly nodded her head in confirmation. The townspeople who had been behind her started to crowd forward.

“W... will we change into monsters too, magician-nim?”

“I’m sorry, but could you perhaps heal us too.....”

When it came to their own well-being, they were quick to step forward. Artpe let out a bitter laugh as he shook his head.

“You guys are fine. It seems the curse was placed on children, who hadn’t matured completely yet. So the problem is with your offsprings.”

“T... then my daughter...!?”

“Curse..... A curse!”

“It’ll be fine if I’m able to find them quickly. You shouldn’t worry about them this early in the process.”

They had thought this was a simple matter of the soldiers capturing their sons and daughters. However, a Modification Curse had been placed on them! The complexion of the townspeople immediately darkened.

They were afraid of the sword carrying soldiers. However, they were more afraid of magic and curses. These were mysterious powers of unknown origin.

“What shall we do, magician-nim? We’ll do anything. If my child turns into a monster, I.....!”

“I beg of you! Please save my son!”

They were already very worried about their offsprings, but they found out there was a time limit to their rescue. The townspeople were agitated, and they went wild. If the soldiers were in front of them, they would have tried to rip them into pieces. Moreover, Maetel was also in a similar state of agitation.

“Let’s go right now, Artpe! I don’t know where the children of this tow is right now, but I’m sure the bad guys will do the same thing at different locations!”

“It is as you say. We don’t know where they are, so do you really want to search the entire region?”

“Still, we have to do something!”

In truth, old stories and legends about heroes were rife with such scenarios.

Some town would fall into crisis, and the hero would try to solve a problem with the help of the townspeople. However, a tragedy occurred when time ran out, and the hero would receive a big emotional burden. However, the pain of this event would allow the hero to mature mentally.

“However, we don’t need to mature mentally, so we can skip that step.”

Heroes who busily ran around deserts and jungles, while crying or laughing, were old news to him. Artpe couldn’t afford to waste his mental and physical energy like that.

What was so fun about searching everywhere, because one didn’t know location where the Quest had to be carried out! He was a new breed of hero where he would finish the Quest as soon as he received it!

“Everyone get out of my way.”

“Yes. Yes, sir!”

Several dozen Mana Threads turned into several hundred as they extended out from Artpe. In a flash, they exited the town to spread into the region.

“Hoo-oooh…….”

Artpe looked as if he was standing still while he had his eyes closed. However, even those that didn't know anything about Mana could feel a pressure coming from this strange energy, and the townspeople were unable to move. Maetel, who had a decent idea on what was going on, let out a sigh of relief.

“If you had such a simple solution, you should have told me in the first place.”

“Who said this was simple?”

He took out a Mana potion bottle, and he drank it. He focused on his control as he grumbled to himself... The several hundred Mana Threads were spreading in all directions, and the radius of the search increased steadily. It increase to 500 meters, 1 kilometers, 2 kilometers and so on.

In his past life, he was level 350, so this would have been easy. However, it wasn't easy at all right now! If it wasn't for the Mana String spell that strengthened the Mana Thread to the extreme, it would have been impossible to attempt this move. He briefly had this thought when he learned it, but it was a very cheat-like spell.

‘Wait a moment. I could probably overlay my spell similarly to what Maetel did last time with her techniques…….’

He wondered if his spell could be used in a more effective manner if he overlaid his perception skill on top of the Mana String.

Artpe immediately put his theory into action, and of course, it came back as a resounding success. He wondered if he was stealing and using Maetel's talent for such a trivial matter. He had been afraid... However, if he was to be truthful about it, he was thankful for it.

“Five kilometer. Ten kilometer...”

“Shall I lend you my Mana, Artpe?”

“You only have a modicum of Mana, so how……. I found them.”

He was about to grumble towards Maetel when Artpe's eyes opened wide.

The townspeople looked at him with nervous eyes. Aena looked at him with trust, since he had freed her body from the curse. Maetel was ready to charge any opponents waiting for them.....

Artpe spoke to them in a solemn manner.

“Let’s go create an epilogue.”

The place was located at a hill that was pretty far from the town. In other words, it was a great place to run into a Dungeon in the wild.

In this world, there were exactly two types of Dungeons. The first type was the sleeping Dungeons that waited for a hero to find it. The other type were Dungeons made by being that opposed the heroes. These Dungeons contained dangerous traps, super secret information or secret tests. These were Dungeons that had to be hidden away.

The common point of the two types of Dungeons was the fact that heroes eventually found it to loot their contents. The Dungeon in this hill would suffer the same fate.

“You guys don’t have to follow me.”

“You are helping us despite the dangers, so how can we stay behind.....”

“You guys will get in the way, so just hide somewhere nearby. Of course, it isn’t my responsibility if you die in the process.”

He was an ex-Four Heavenly King turned hero, so he was remorseless. He firmly got rid of nuisances that would get in the way of the Quest beforehand!

The townspeople became afraid when they realized there might be other dangers nearby. However, they couldn’t run away while leaving their children behind. They firmly held to their edged tools they had brought from their homes. They stood their ground.

“W... we will wait for you here. At the very least, we will greet our children from here!”

“Really? Aren’t you guys just scared by the fact that soldiers might attack your town again?”

“I... it isn't like that!”

It seemed he hit the mark. Artpe smirked as he tried to enter into the cave located at the middle of the hill.....

“I want to go with you.”

“Ah. You again?”

Aena blocked their way. She held a branch in one hand. It was a weapon that even a goblin would have an easy time breaking.

“The children will be afraid if only magician-nim's party enters. The children need at least one familiar face.”

“It isn't as if your words don't have merit, but you.....”

She would be perfect for the part of a supporting cast who died midway in the story. Usually, the hero would rage at her death, and the boost provided by the emotion would lead the hero into victory.

In truth, the girl's words were raising so many death flags that the stench coming from the death energy was unbearable. It wouldn't be strange if she fell dead right now! At the same time, it was also likely that she would come back out unharmed, since the circumstances was a bit suspicious.

“I beg of you, magician-nim. I know these children the best. They are already afraid from being kidnapped by the soldiers. If the magician-nim's party encounter the children in such a state, a large mistake may occur.....!”

She had put a lot of thought into this. At this point, he couldn't turn turn her down. From that moment on, Artpe decided to give up on Aena's life. Yes, if she's meant to die, she would find a way to die eventually!

“All right. Your sacrifice will make it more likely that the children would be unharmed.”

“Why is my sacrifice the premise of the children being safe!?”

“Let's go, Maetel. I'll leave the fighting to you. When I tell you to stop, you have to stop.”

“I understand!”

The party consisting of the two heroes and the Village Girl A left behind the townspeople. They charged into the cave. There was a very dark and dreary energy circulating within the cave. A curse was mixed into the Dungeon’s air. To be precise, it was curse meant to propagate a different spell.

“You must be enjoying it since there are a lot to eat, right?”

Artpe took out the Obsidian, and it sucked in all the curses. He never expected to find such a treasure within the normal town A at this point in time. This was a loss for the Demon King’s army!

“Yes. As expected, I think Artpe would become a good father. Ooh-hue-hue.”

Maetel watched Artpe fill the Obsidian with the curse. She looked on with satisfaction as she mumbled to herself. Aena wondered if she could trust these heroes that acted very strangely starting from the Dungeon’s entrance. She had these thoughts, but she also didn’t have much choice. She followed behind them.

When they entered a little bit deeper into the cave, the enemies soon appeared. The soldiers they had seen from the town was mixed in with a batch of soldiers they had never seen before.

The most important fact was that there was a magician wearing a hooded robe standing within their midst.

“Huht!? They are intruders. Intruders!”

“Be careful. He’s the mage I saw in town.....!”

“Magician? That brat is one?”

It seemed the soldiers didn’t feel any shame at being found out. They immediately got ready to attack. It meant they were fully aware of what they were doing, and they were prepared to kill to fulfill their goals.

At this point, he was sure that there was a connection between the archduke, the black magician and the Demon King’s army. Artpe was about to step forward as he grinded his teeth, but Maetel took one step forward before he was able to.

“You are making children into monsters..... It’s bad.”

Maetel’s emerald colored eyes flashed from anger. Artpe realized she had already finished judging who was good and evil.

“Anyways, we.....”

This was the part where the hero and the villains confronted each other. The villains would lay out their twisted logic behind their actions as they mocked the hero.

The hero would become enraged, and they would fight. The bad guys liked to talk while fighting, so they would prattle on about the righteousness of their actions. They would try to justify their cause. The hero would get angry once again at their words. The Death Knight within the Dungeon meant to foster the heroes was a great example of this.

“Be quiet! Shut the hell up!”

However, the current situation was different. Maetel swung her bastard sword once before her enemies could pull their swords out or activate a spell. They all fell to the floor.

She hadn’t activated her Berserk. She wasn’t even using her Strike skill. It was a light attack that possessed not a single ounce of Mana.

“Hoo-oooooh.”

They were completely wiped out. They didn’t even have the time to give their lines. The mage wasn’t able to call out the Black Flame Dragon sealed within its right arm!

“Heeeek.....”

Aena had depended on them, because she had seen the power of Artpe as a magician. However, when she saw the terrible sight created by Maetel, her face turned pale.

On the other hand, Maetel was the one who had created this terrible sight, yet it didn’t feel real to her. She tilted her head in confusion as she turned to speak to Artpe.

“They are too weak, Artpe.”

Artpe did a double take when he heard her words, but a smile soon broke out on his face. He nodded his head at her.

“It’s all right.”

Usually, a normal hero’s first quest was accompanied by failure and hardships. However, they had unintentionally leveled up as much as they could in the kingdom of Diaz. In other words...

“Since we are progressing towards part 2, this is normal.”

“Part 2?”

Maetel tilted her head in puzzlement, but Artpe just smiled at her. While Aena was still in an utter state of confusion, the heroes went through the entire Dungeon.

No one could get in their way.

Chapter 36

Come to Think of It, I'm a Hero (4)

Artpe ran through the Dungeon with his Read All Creation ability active. He was able to find the trap. He was able to assess the number of the nearby enemies and their abilities. He was also able to monitor the amount of Mana possessed by the Dungeon.

His existence made any traps and ambushes irrelevant. Moreover, no one could endure more than a single attack from Artpe and Maetel. Aena was running without rest, yet she was barely able to keep up with them.

“They are strong……!”

“That is the third line in the ‘50 lines that no one survived after saying it’. You must have studied it a little bit.”

Artpe had been running while he kept a hold on Aena’s hand. He lightly infused Mana into his dagger. The dagger pierced through the throat of a retreating soldier. When the soldier fell, the black magician hiding in the back was revealed.

“B... blessing of the clandestine darkness……”

“Hoohng.”

His opponent revealed his identity as a black magician by chanting a spell. However, the dagger planted inside the throat slid out as it rose into the air again. It embedded itself into the black magician’s heart.

The black magician had no idea what had happened to him. He fell helplessly to the floor as Maetel also took care of the remaining soldiers in a flash. She mumbled to herself as if she was dumbfounded by what had occurred.

“They are too weak.”

“Do you remember me telling you about the Demon world’s greatest chef?”

“Yes! I want to eat food that was cooked by that demon!”

Artpe looked at her with peculiar eyes when she said those words.

“It seems the Demons are making a once in a lifetime food here.”

“How do you know that? There are only bad people here.”

“There is a reason.”

If there was a powerful Demon present here, there was a good chance that Artpe and Maetel would suffer a defeat. However, this was probably a minor plan, so why would they dispatch a Demon over level 200 here? It wasn't something that was done lightly. All the black magicians up until now were humans, and none of them were over level 50.

In truth, the Demon King didn't just send the weakest first against the hero. He sent the weakest amongst his subordinates to do all his tasks. This was also true when he dealt with the joint forces.

It somewhat made sense if he planned on only letting the strongest survive regardless if they were allies or not. Anyways, no matter how he thought about it, the Demon King was an idiot.

“R... run away.....!”

“No, we can't run away.”

“We..... we have to call him.....”

“No, we can't call him.”

The weak typically ran away when a strong opponent made an appearance. If running away wasn't an option, they called for reinforcement. Of course, it was useless in front of the all-around hero Maetel and the rotten hero Artpe.

“Koohk!”

“Kah-hahk!”

They were all killed as soon as they were found, so news didn't flow towards the inner Dungeon where others were on standby. This was why they died saying similar lines or they died before they could even speak.

Artpe planned on making a manuscript that wrote down the most common phrases spoken before death by minor characters. His enemies here were faithful in using those repertoire of phrases.

"Use the transmission magic!"

"That isn't working either."

"Kahk!"

At the very least, Artpe was vigilant about their use of transmission magic. They didn't have to be afraid of anyone within the Dungeon, but if an officer of the Demon King's army could be mobilized, there would be no countermeasure.

Of course, transmission magic was useless in front of his Read All Creation ability and Mana String. His opponents couldn't even use a simple magic or a curse.

"D... do you guys realize what you've just done!"

"Yes, we already know, so you don't have to explain it to us."

"Kuh-huhk!"

It was as if the soldiers deluded themselves into thinking they were the archduke, and the black magicians put on air as if they had risen to the seat of the Demon King. However, they were all killed by Maetel's sword and Artpe's dagger before they could utter their threats.

The 1st floor ended in short order, and the 2nd floor also didn't take too long.

Aena was getting tired as she tried to keep up with them.

"How... Hehk. This is....."

"Shhh."

When they descended to the 3rd floor, Artpe spread his Mana Threads in all directions. He immediately asked for silence from his party members. Then his expression crumpled in a rueful manner.

“As expected of a first Quest... The Dungeon ends at the third floor. However... The Quest started a bit too late. Tsk.”

“Sometimes Artpe says some very profound words.”

“The children are here.....?”

The curse present in the atmosphere of the 1st and 2nd floor was bearable for normal people. However, it was possible to see the curse with one’s eye on the 3rd floor. It looked like a very thick fog.

“Koohk, magician-nim. It feels as if the air is burning.....!”

When he saw that Aena’s complexion had immediately turn pale, he took out the obsidian as he clicked his tongue. It sucked in all the curse residing within the atmospheric Mana.

Aena’s complexion improved a little bit, but the pain she was feeling wouldn’t subside until he could get rid of all the curse in the atmosphere. Nevertheless, it was fortunate that he had gotten rid of her curse earlier.

“We’ll be running at full speed from now on. Aena, you have to run as if your life's on the line. Understood?”

“I... I understand.”

The 3rd floor was unusually quiet. There were only three people running across the floor, so small sounds echoed throughout the hallway. All the traps were disabled and destroyed. The soldiers and black magicians that had shown up on the 1st and 2nd floor every time they had gotten bored weren’t present here. The curse on the 3rd floor had been strong enough to be dangerous to them too.

“It is so quiet that it is making me feel very uneasy. Artpe.....”

“Don’t worry. The children aren’t dead yet. At the very least, not all of them.”

Artpe's words hinted at something. It was easy to discern what he was talking about. The expression on the faces of Maetel and Aena hardened. However, their steps quickened as if they were responding to their emotions.

Maetel bravely ran through the Dungeon filled with the curse. Artpe tied the Obsidian of Greed to a Mana String, and he rotated it to suck in all the curse. He kept storing the curse as he followed her.

Aena followed behind them, and tears were already filling her eyes. She held a branch in her slender hands. She had brought it with her as her weapon, and her heart shook like the branch.

They passed one room than another.

Maetel suddenly came to a stop when they went past the 3rd room.

".....ooh."

"Warrior-nim?"

"Ooooooh."

A groan leaked out of Maetel's mouth. Artpe had seen the information regarding his surrounding with his Read All Creation ability, so he knew why she was reacting that way.

If possible, he hadn't wanted her to see this sight. However, the Obsidian of Greed sucked in all of the fog created by the curse. It made the surrounding brighter, so it was impossible to miss it.

".....they are dead."

Maetel spoke with a trembling voice. One could see a dead monster at the corner of the room. It had lying in a pool of its blood. Artpe kept silent as Aena also caught sight of the monster.

The monster had a small body as if it hadn't fully matured, yet its arms and legs were abnormally long. It was wearing tattered human clothes, and it was crusted with dried brown blood.

“Ah. Ah-ooooh.”

When she confirmed the other monster corpses, Aena let out an inarticulate moan. The monsters weren't wearing clothes or accessories that would allow her to identify them. However, they all looked like her dongsaeng to her.

Artpe was able to find out that the children had turned into monsters around 10 days ago using his Read All Creation ability. However, he kept that fact to himself. All the dead monsters here had been in the same situation as Aena's dongsaeng.

“Why did they kill them……?”

“That I do not know. If their goal was to make children into monsters, they probably wanted them for something. They must have had a plan. The fact that they killed the children instead of sending them out into the world……”

It was hard to come up with an explanation. If the Demon King's army wanted to sow confusion in the outside world, they would have sent the monsters out into the world. They had succeeded in applying the curse, yet the monsters were killed? It was an idiotic move.

If not, maybe there was a plan that Artpe was unable to discern?

“It must have hurt a lot.”

While Artpe was going through his thoughts, Matel mumbled to herself in an absent minded manner. The monsters had died as they spit out blood, and Maetel couldn't turn her gaze away from them. She kept repeating the same words as if something had broken within her.

“It must have hurt a lot... It must have hurt a lot...”

“Maetel.”

A red energy started emanating from her body. It was a sign that her Berserker skill was about to be activated. Artpe quickly grabbed her, and the energy was instantly gathered within her. The fact that she was able to retract it so easily was scarier than the skill itself.

Maetel turned towards Artpe as she made a request.

“Artpe? The children... Please don’t leave any behind...”

“I understand.”

When Artpe extended his hand, the corpses of the dead monsters were incinerated in a flash. He had spent a great deal of money learning this magic, yet he had never expected this would be the first place he would use it. He was dumbfounded at the turn of events.

“I’m sorry, kids... I’m sorry I didn’t get here sooner.”

“Ah, ah-oooooh..... hoohk.”

Maetel mumbled to herself as she stood still. She watched the corpses of the children turn to ash inside the fire. Aena couldn’t shake the thought that her dongsaeng might be amongst the dead monsters. She wasn’t in her right mind. Artpe watched them as he firmly bit his lips.

‘Maetel’s abilities are amazing, but her mind is too immature. If possible, I wanted her to experience such dirty business later on..... Shit.’

Since the incident had already occurred, nothing could be done about it. Artpe wanted to change the mood surrounding Maetel and Aena, so he lightly clapped his hands. He drew their attention to him.

“We can mourn for them at a later time. We have to move before it is too late.”

“.....I understand.”

Maetel firmly nodded her head. She glared at the fog created by the curse, and she launched herself forward.

“Let’s hurry.”

The 3rd floor of the Dungeon was ridiculously long compared to the other floors. Every time the curse was absorbed the sight of one or two corpses of monsters revealed themselves.

Aena’s body shook every time more corpses were found, but the two heroes didn’t stop. The only thing they did was to burn the bodies with flame when they were found.

The only thing that deserved a special mention was Maetel's status.

[Maetel]

[Level : 174]

[Berserk Lv13]

He knew Maetel hadn't activated her Berserk skill, but when he checked with his Read All Creation ability, her Berserk skill was progressing in real-time.

When she saw the corpses of the monster-turned children being burned to ash, she threw herself further into the fog created by the curse, and a red energy emanated from her. It looked as if it would manifest, but Maetel collected it back into herself every time. It was as if she was building up her rage as she waited for the moment to release it all at once.

It was something that could be seen in Berserkers that had learned to control their emotions over numerous years. It was a stage that could be attained after being in countless battles, yet Maetel was showing similar signs to those Berserkers. Even Artpe didn't dare to guess what she was feeling right now.

"I... I've already counted over h... hundred of them, magician-nim. What shall we do? What can we do?"

"The scale of this operation is much larger than I expected. In a worst case scenario, there's a possibility of there being more of these Dungeons..... Maetel, stop."

When she heard Artpe's words, Maetel immediately stopped in place. She also could feel it. The person responsible for these atrocities were nearby.

The Obsidian had already sucked in as much curse as it could in the atmosphere, so the black magician on the 3rd floor had immediately known something was wrong. This was why he had placed a trap as he waited for the party to come to him.

Of course, a Dungeon and a magician that could cast a curse of this caliber couldn't defeat Maetel at her level, but.....

"I know you are angry. However, if you aren't able to shape your rage to your will, it will someday trip you up. Most Berserkers eventually meet their death through this

mistake.”

“Artpe…… Thank you for the warning.”

Maetel had a faint smile on her face. When he was faced with the smile, he realized his warning had been unnecessary.

“However, I’ll never make such a mistake. I can’t afford to make that kind of mistake at this moment.”

“……yes. Let’s do this.”

“All right.”

When Maetel took one step, Artpe extended his Mana String to completely disable the trap waiting for them. Of course, when he did so, their enemy became aware of it.

“You guys saw through the trap, you damn bastards!”

There was only one enemy here. To be precise, there was only one black magician capable of enduring the atmospheric curse.

“You guys made such a ruckus… That is why I’m going to deal with you myself… huh?”

The obsidian had sucked in all the atmospheric curse. One could see children carelessly discarded all over the large room as if they were a collection of junk materials. Then there was the middle aged man wearing a overly elaborate robe pointing his staff at them.

“You guys are kids……!?”

The magician was also able to see the party now. When he realized the intruders were merely three children, his eyes widened in surprise.

“I never expected children to be able to endure the curse to reach this place!”

Artpe calmly asked the question.

“Are you the one who spread this damned curse?”

“Of course, I spread it! However, the result has been sub-optimal. Now that I see you guys...”

An ugly smile appeared on his face...

“If this goes well, I might be able to succeed in my test!”

“A test.....”

Maetel gripped her long sword hard.

While they confronted the black magician, she continued to look over the fallen children inside this communal space.

She saw the starving children who were sullied by the curse. They were in pain.

“A test...”

The red energy soared before it was absorbed. This process kept repeating itself. If rage could be personified, Artpe thought the person would look like Maetel right now.

“You are bad. You are really bad!”

Maetel couldn’t hold herself back, so she denounced her opponent. The amount of red vapor emanating from her body kept increasing.

It seemed the black magician was unable to see this vapor. If he could feel her heavy anger, he wouldn’t be able to smile like right now.

“Haha. You are very funny, child! Who do you think you are? What allows you to be able to determine what is right and wrong? You have a lot to learn! A lot!”

Maetel ignored his words as she slightly bent her knees. She pushed her sword for a to get into her stance.

There was a distance of 50 meters between Maetel and the black magician. From the black magician’s perspective, it looked as if she had lost her cool. He thought that was why she didn’t register the distance between them. The magician grinned when he assessed her state of emotion. He laughed as he raised his staff.

“It seems I’ll have to give you an explanation. I’ll tell you what my test is for. It is for our great.....”

The bastard tried to do something evil characters had a patent on. He tried to explain why they were doing such bad things, their final goal and the method in which they would terrorize the world. However, he wasn’t able to enlighten them.

“Hoo-ooh.”

Maetel’s long sword cut his head off in one stroke. Normal humans die when their head was severed. The dead do not speak. Unfortunately, the bastard hadn’t put a curse on himself that would have turned him into a lich.

“W... warrior-nim.”

“Maetel, you.....”

Until a moment ago, Maetel had been pretty far away from her target. However, she was putting away her sword as she stood where the black magician had been standing previously. Aena and Artpe’s eyes turned round when they saw something akin to magic. Maetel turned to look at Artpe, and she was in a similar state of shock.

“It feels weird, Artpe.”

She couldn’t use magic. If so, did she borrow Artpe’s boots to use the Blink spell? Of course not.

“It feels as if this power has always been within me.”

“That’s…… So that’s how it is.”

Artpe replied with a dumbfounded yet hollow voice.

He was having a hard time believing the information reflected in his eyes. He already knew she was a genius, but he never imagined the possibility of her talent exceeding the hero from his previous life.

[Maetel]

[Hero]

[Level : 174]

[Innate Ability : Acceleration]

The hero from his previous life had barely been able to awaken to her innate ability called Acceleration at age 19.

Maetel had just awakened to it at age 13.

Chapter 37

Come to Think of It, I'm a Hero (5)

In his past life, the hero had grown rapidly despite being severely handicapped by her environment. She had grown from level 200 to level 374 in just a year. Even if a great chef assisted in her development, it would have been impossible to do without her Innate Abilities.

That's right. The hero had awakened to an Innate Ability called Acceleration at the age of 19. The Acceleration skill could function as either a passive skill or an active skill. It sped up all her abilities. The smallest benefit from her movement speeding up, and the largest benefit came from it influencing her growth.

Her level up had been unusually fast until now thanks to a small fragment of her latent innate influencing her. Moreover, the power of Acceleration allowed her to move at unbelievable speed to cut down the black magician.

Of course, if she used it as an active skill, it would consume significant amount of Mana. However, it was the maximization of her basic movements, so it wouldn't exhaust her.

'I knew she would awaken to it faster, since she was injected into live battles at an earlier age compared to her previous incarnation. However, I never expected her to learn that particular ability at age 13.....'

Artpe looked at Maetel who looked confused. He mumbled to himself as he felt dumbfounded.

Most in the human race didn't possess an Innate ability. It was the same for the Demon race. Even if one had the requirements needed to possess an Innate Ability, it was unknown as to when a person might develop that Innate Ability. It wouldn't surprise anyone if it took several dozens of years for it to develop. It wasn't impossible for one to fail to develop one's Innate Ability in one's life time.

However, once one's Innate Ability was awakened, one would gain a power that was on a whole different level. One would also grow at a pace that couldn't be compared to the previous rate. Most of the beings that left an indelible mark in history all had

Innate Abilities. Even when an Innate Ability looks useless, it had a special quality of overpowering other skills and Classes.

“Innate ability.....”

Maetel had heard Artpe’s explanation, but it seemed she was having a hard time wrapping her head around it. It was to be expected. Her actions wasn't something she had done consciously. It had resulted, because she had let her instincts take over her body.

If she was asked to use the Acceleration ability again right now, she would be unable to use it. Of course, the Innate Ability would continue to influence her since it had been awakened. Her level up pace would be faster than before..... Artpe had a thought. Maybe it would really take them less than 2 years to kill the Demon King. He let out a feigned laughter at the thought.

“Maetel, you don’t have to worry too much about it. I’ll slowly walk you through it.”

“I understand, Artpe. As expected, Artpe already has an Innate Ability?hue hue. You really are amazing.”

It seemed she felt a little bit better after deposing the black magician. Maetel was finally able to bring herself to smile a little bit. Aena, who had been watching all of this, impatiently tugged at Artpe’s sleeve.

“M... magician-nim. Can we now... what I’m trying to say is.....”

“Yes, I’m sorry. This was such an unexpected development that both of us became absent minded. We’ll finish the Quest now.”

Artpe shook off Aena’s hand, and he turned around. Beyond the dead corpse of the black magician, he could see children writhing in pain.

“It hurts.”

“Mommy.....”

The black magician imprisoning them was dead, yet the children was unable to realize this fact. The children were a hollow shell of themselves. They had lost their normal thoughts and senses. They were being tormented by the pain.

“You will be ok now, kids. We’ll help you guys!”

“Sienna, Sienna!”

“It hurts. It hurts!”

“I want to see my mom. Mommy.”

The communal space was a mess. How many children were in this place?

The number of monster corpses they discovered coming to the 3rd floor was insignificant compared to the number of children here. If every child here became monsters,..... If the Demon King’s army took control of the monsters here to attack the other towns within this kingdom.....

“The war with the Demon King’s army will be hastened a little bit.....”

They had put a lot of effort in turning the children into monsters, yet they were killed and thrown away inside the Dungeon. The black magician beheaded by Maetel had spouted some nonsense about an experiment. It seemed they weren’t simply trying to turn children into monsters.

‘No, this isn’t the time to have such thoughts...’

Artpe took out the Obsidian of Greed. At that moment, the flow of energy within the communal space changed.

There was the faint energy of curse in the air, and the wicked energy leaking out from the corpse. Then there was the curse energy roiling within the innocent children.

All of it were changed into black smoke. This black smoke flooded towards Artpe and the obsidian he was holding.

“Koohk.”

“Artpe!?”

Maetel had been overwhelmed by the sight created by Artpe. However, she let out a scream when she saw him grip his head. Artpe shook his head as if to tell her that she didn’t need to worry about him.

He was using the obsidian against numerous children at once. Even if he was the possessor of the Read All Creation ability, he couldn't escape the headache created by this act..... Still, he'd rather endure the headache rather than see the hero's heart crumble in this place.

"You should comfort the children. There is a close connection between the curse and their emotions..... If you speak to them in a calm voice, it should be enough. Please do this for me."

".....I understand."

It was hard to tell if they were human or trash if seen from afar. The children were carelessly thrown together in a neglected pile. One could tell that they weren't given much food or water. It was the perfect environment that would fuel the advance of the curse.

"Sienna! Sienna, where are you!"

Aena kept calling out her dongsaeng's name as she walked amongst the children. It seems she wasn't having any luck finding her. Artpe didn't have any reason to stop her. He fully understood what she was feeling right now.

"You'll be fine, children. You'll all be fine now..... You'll be fine."

"Sienna..... Please!"

"Ah. Ooh-ahhhhh....."

It was almost like a miracle to them. At that moment, they heard a voice that made the hearts of Maetel, Aena and Artpe brighten. In the midst of the children groaning in pain, they definitely heard a voice that held consciousness!

"Artpe!"

There was a quick catch in her voice as Maetel let out a shout of joy. As if he had been waiting for this moment, he started giving her directions.

"Let's move him out towards the perimeter! More and more children will be freed from the hold of the curse!"

“Yes!”

Maetel let out tears of joy as she took the child to the perimeter. It wasn't just that child. She separated the children in the throes of pain, so each child had some room of their own. She hugged and stroked the children.

Her heart had been in a heightened state from the rage she felt. However, her heart had now calmed down. She directed an endless amount of worry and sympathy towards the children. When he saw this, Artpe let out a sigh of relief even though he was suffering from a headache.

“Ah, ah-ooh-ooh?”

“I... I can see again. Who are you, noona?”

“I want you to bear with me a little bit further. You'll make a complete recovery soon!”

As more Mana rushed towards the obsidian, more children gained consciousness as they were freed from the curse. It started with one child. The number increased to 10, 50..... The expressions of the other children started to calm down.

“Amazing, Artpe... You are amazing.”

“Sienna!”

The number of children gaining consciousness went past 100, yet Aena hadn't caught sight of her dongsaeng. Aena calculated the date when she was captured. Her dongsaeng shouldn't have been amongst the slain monsters...

Artpe firmly bit his lips as he checked the status of the black obsidian. The obsidian had darkened to a point where it indicated that it had almost reached its limit.

He knew there was a limit to how much it can store, but it had filled up too fast. This quest had been much larger in scale than he had expected it to be.

Fortunately, Artpe had prepared for the worst, so he had a contingency plan in his back pocket.

“Reinforcement.”

In the process of smashing through the beginner's Dungeon with Maetel, he had acquired the Reinforcement skill. This wasn't just a normal reinforcement skill. The skill allowed him to improve an Artifact at its foundation. In his previous life, Artpe wouldn't have dare to dream about obtaining such a skill. It was a Rank SSS skill!

This skill was in Artpe's hands right now.

He could see the structure of all items through his Read All Creation ability, and now he had the Reinforcement skill. He could use Reinforcement on specific parts of an item, and it was possible for him to reinforce an item that was supposed to be impossible to reinforce. Basically, it was a cheat.

It was as he surmised. It was possible to strengthen the Obsidian of Greed with his Reinforcement skill. In a flash, half of Artpe's enormous reservoir of Mana was consumed by the obsidian. The obsidian shone brighter than before, and it had increased in size.

Once again the flow of energy within the space changed. When the obsidian's absorption rate was reinforced, the cursed Mana hidden within the body of the children couldn't resist against the pull of the obsidian.

"Ggoo-ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!"

"It hurts. It hurts too much!"

Screams of pain erupted from various locations. However, the pain was proof that they were alive.

The scream became shouts, and despair turned into joy.

Artpe was controlling too much Mana flow, so it felt as if his head was about to burst. He ignored the pain as he kept increasing the absorption rate. It would be a tragic comedy if monsters were born, because he dawdled.

"Sienna..... Sienna!"

"U... unni."

It was at that moment when Aena found her dongsaeng. Her dongsaeng was sprawled amongst the children. She had been barely able to regain consciousness thanks to

Artpe's power, and she was able to face her unni.

Artpe glanced towards them when he became loss for words.

"U... unni."

"Sienna? Sienna, what's wrong! Sienna!"

A tragic comedy of a situation was about to really occur right now.

"Unni, it hurts. My head and chest hurts so much. Unni, unni."

"S... Sienna! Magician-nim! My Sienna is...!"

Artpe didn't reply to Aena's heartfelt plea. He firmly shut his mouth, but he was able to see the most accurate information regarding the girl named Sienna through his eyes.

[Sienna]

[Level : 1]

[Strength : 6 Agility : 7 Stamina : 14 Magical Energy : 23]

[Transformation Progress to Intermediate Magic-type Species 33%]

[Experiment Success]

The curse applied to Sienna had been a success, and she was being turned into a monster. He could try to pull out the curse energy, but the change had already started. The curse and her Mana were tangled, so his actions might make her suffer more pain before she died.

It was an absurd situation. How could the timing be like this? Why did it have to be Aena's dongsaeng? It was a most laughable situation he found himself in. This story seemed to be tailor-made for a hero's story. It almost made him question if this scenario was constructed from the beginning.

"Magician-nim! My dongsaeng's face is darkening... Magician-nim!"

“.....”

Maetel was taking care of the other children. Her face stiffened when she realized what Sienna was talking about. However, she wasn't like Aena who kept calling Artpe's name. She asked Artpe a question with a calm voice.

“Artpe..... Were we too late for this child?”

“You.....”

What did she plan on doing if they were too late to do anything? Artpe was afraid of her answer, so he didn't ask the question. She was extremely pure, and she wanted to save the children. In the future, he knew she would regret her decision if things proceeded along this path.

“W... warrior-nim. She can recover. It isn't too late for Sienna! Warrior-nim! Please speak some sense into her, magician-nim!”

It seemed Aena could sense what Maetel was planning on doing. Her eyes turned round as she desperately clung to Maetel.

She was only level 1, so she didn't have the power to stop Maetel. However, Maetel couldn't advance as she turned her gaze towards Aena. Maetel's face was also distorted.

“Aena... What if Sienna harms the other children... What would you do? How would you handle this when the other children will become involved.... I don't know the answer. I'm sorry, Aena. I don't know...”

“You can't, warrior-nim! Please save Sienna! Magician-nim, magician-nim!”

It seemed the conversation with Aena had the effect of pushing Maetel towards an unfavorable outcome for Aena. Maetel firmly shut her eyes before she opened them. Sienna was starting to change, so Maetel slowly walked towards her.

“Wait a moment, Maetel.”

Artpe stopped Maetel at that moment... The obsidian had reached Rank S thanks to the power of the Reinforcement skill. He had absorbed all the curse from the children except for the one within Sienna.

There wasn't a single ounce of curse energy within the communal space. It didn't matter what the Demon King's army had planned here. A part of their plan ended in failure at that moment. At this point, the Quest could be seen as a success.

Of course, this would be true if they excluded one person, Aena's dongsaeng.

"I said stop, Maetel. The Quest hasn't ended yet."

Maetel continued to walk towards the child, but she obediently stopped when she heard him call her.

"Artpe, perhaps....."

Her mouth opened. Her voice shook.

"Is it possible.....?"

"You should keep your sword unsheathed. We don't know when she'll run rampant."

".....yes."

Maetel unsheathed her sword with trembling hands. Aena no longer held onto Maetel. She just looked at Artpe with pleading eyes.

As he received pleading gazes from the two girls, he let out a long sigh as he walked forward.

At his core, Artpe didn't like adventures. He was of the opinion that adventurers shouldn't do adventures.

There was no reason to take unnecessary risks for him. There was no reason why he should expect failure.

He could check all answers with his Read All Creation ability. He just had to act when he had the right answers. It was that simple.

However, he was looking at Sienna's information window. She seemed to be in a hopeless situation, but two things bothered Artpe.

First, there was the ambiguous term of 'Intermediate Magic-type Species' written in

her info. Secondly, he saw the word 'Experiment Success'. He hadn't been able to see those words in children that had been successfully turned into monsters.

What if the goal of the tests weren't to make children into monsters? If that was their goal then they would have branded the monster-turned children as successful test subjects. Why would they kill them once they were turned into monsters?

As he kept thinking about it, he kept having questions about the word 'Intermediate Magic-type Species'. Of course, monsters were a magic type. So why did they use the particular expression of magic type species?

When he discovered the curse for the first time in Aena, he had seen the same phrase. At the time, it hadn't caught his attention. However, maybe Artpe was operating under a misapprehension?

What if the black magicians and the Demon King's army weren't aiming for a simple monster transformation?

What if the fact that the children were completely turned into monsters were considered to be failures? What if they were killed for that reason?

What if there was something special about Aena and Sienna?

What if Sienna was the 'only' success in their experiments?

"Koo-koo-ahhhhhh. It hurts so much, unni. Unni, uniiiiiii!"

"Sienna, no! Sienna!"

"Artpe.....! Hurry!"

When it specified magic type species... It might be referring to the 'Demon race'.

This test was aimed at making humans into demons.

"Shit. That damn Demon King....."

If this was truly the Demon King's plan, maybe the Demon King came up with a 'control' plan that differed from the one in his previous life!

“Maybe he is thinking about using ‘Absolute Control’ on all the beings on this world!”

Artpe gritted his teeth as he shouted those words. He couldn’t remain calm any longer.

The massive amount of Mana stored within his body was resolved into a Mana Strings. It looked as if wings had sprouted from Artpe.

The dark Mana threads clung to the entire body of the human girl who was turning into a demon. He started desperately tuning her Mana.

“I won’t let you do this……!”

Artpe’s eyes shone with a purple light.

“I won’t let you have her, you son of a bitch!”

He was able to see past everything to reach the truth. His Innate Ability always led him towards the right path. He combined the ability with a Unique spell called Mana String.

It was supposed to be impossible to combine the two abilities, yet they were combined. The girl’s body was being demonified at an uncontrollable speed. Her body twitched.

The Mana within her body started flowing backwards at the guidance of the Mana Strings.

The hero forged a miracle at that moment.

Chapter 38

Come to Think of It, I'm a Hero (6)

He had become a hero, so he finally stiffened his resolve to fight the Demon King. So what the hell was this? The Demon King was trying to change humans into demons? Artpe wanted to farm in the human world at a later date. It would be a problem if the human world was turned into the demon world! He wouldn't forgive anyone who attempted to pour cold water on Artpe's retirement plan.

Artpe's burning will was infused into the Mana Strings, and they burrowed into her body. From the beginning, Artpe hadn't planned on stopping the change entirely. A complete reversal of the change was impossible. Such tasks were in the territory of the gods.

The only thing he could do was influence the direction of the change. Yes, it was the same as when he made the changes to the Record Link inside the Dungeon.

'I just have to prevent her from becoming a demon. She also has to have control over herself. I have to protect these two things. It is a must.'

Artpe used all the experience he gained from his past life as he tuned her with his Mana Strings. The Mana Strings infused with the power of the Read All Creation ability continuously moved in a subtle manner to suppress the changes caused by the Mana, and the Mana was directed towards a different direction.

Whether it was his life as a demon or a human hero, his Innate Ability had always been with him. It was really ironic that these two vastly different experiences were of help when dealing with this problem.

He now had extensive knowledge about demons and humans. His knowledge allowed him to combine the Mana String and the Read All Creation ability. It gave him the ability to open a new path for the Mana within Sienna's body.

"Ah. Ah-ooh-ooh-ahhhhhh."

"Can you hear me, Sienna? You have to resist against the impulse to fight the flow of

Mana. You have to concentrate, and you have to be clear in your thoughts. You can't be swayed by your impulse."

Artpe kept talking to Sienna, who was groaning from the pain she was feeling. He continued to manipulate his Mana Strings.

In some aspects, he had to concentrate harder than the time when he had absorbed all the curse in this communal space at once. However, he was fueled by his anger towards the Demon King, and an urgent need to prevent Maetel from becoming wounded by this incident. There were multiple factors driving him forward, so this task was really nothing to him.

"Sienna, Sienna!"

"Stay still, Aena. I also feel restless, but... If we interfere with Artpe right now, Sienna will be in big trouble."

"Ooh ooh ooh.....!"

Maetel had calmed down thanks to Artpe, so she was able to hold back the agitated Aena. She gathered the children to one side.

Even if they had been freed from the curse, they hadn't bathed since arriving here. Moreover, they hadn't been fed. The state of their health was a mess. If she wanted their bodies to feel the least amount of stress, she would have to send them outside the Dungeon.

"Noonah, I'm hungry."

"I'm cold. I'm scared. Who is that hyung? Is he on the same side as the ajusshi? Will we turn out weird like her?"

"No, everything is fine. You will all be better soon."

Maetel was still a child. She was at an age where she should be under the protection of adults. However, she didn't hesitate to take care of children who were of similar age as her. In fact, she took care of kids that were older than her.

'I'm tired. I'm tired and exhausted. I want to rest.'

She glanced at the cowering children, then she turned to look at Artpe. He was using an incomprehensibly complex magic to save the last child.

His eyes didn't falter as brilliant Mana rose out of him. She was sure he was more tired than her, yet Artpe only thought about the task at hand. He did the impossible without hesitation.

'All right.'

Maetel poured strength into her body as she stood up. If Artpe had seen her, she was sure he would have been happy at how she was handling herself. He would have praised her. This thought allowed her to wade through anything that was thrown her way...

'A little bit more! Shit! A little bit more!'

Artpe was panting right now. The girl was floating in the air a little bit as she was continuously showing reaction to the Mana.

Her skin had turned black before, but now it was the opposite. She enough white enough to be called pale, and even her hair had turned into a peculiar milk-like color. In truth, the Mana reaction she was experiencing was large and fierce. It was an indication that the current situation was unstable. It felt as if the situation could run away from him, and she would go on a rampage.

"O... oppa."

"Hold on. You can do this."

When Artpe saw her, he realized the truth that this wasn't just an adventure. This was why he couldn't give up now. The girl labored as she opened her eyes to look at him. He gave her words of encouragement to lift her spirits, and he desperately guided her Mana.

'The full sense of self that cannot be tampered. A body that isn't sullied by the demonic energy.'

He dismantled the Mana that was causing changes to her record and structure. He destroyed the path laid in front of him as he promoted a new path. It was something impossible to do if he hadn't possessed the Read All Creation ability and the Mana

String.

He was using an Innate Ability and a Unique skill at the same time, so he was consuming an extreme amount of Mana. This was why he was having having a hard time breathing, and he felt dizzy. Still, he didn't stop.

This wasn't simply about saving a girl. The Demon King was trying some bullshit of a plan where he was trying to turn humans into demons. This was the first step in destroying the plan crafted by that petty and crafty coward!

The change that was turning Sienna into a demon had been occurring at a straightforward manner. The massive flow of Mana had been repeatedly moving forward before it gave way. Now that massive amount of Mana had come to a stop. It was a miracle.

“.....oppa.”

Artpe's eyes suddenly flew open.

Someone was grabbing onto the edge of his robe. He didn't even have to look to know who it was.

“.....you.”

The girl had opened her eyes, and she was looking at Artpe with a very faint smile on her face. Her Mana rushed towards the new path paved by Artpe.

Sienna had succeeding in learning the Mana Control!

[Sienna]

[Level : 1]

[Mana Control Lv1]

“So if I go this way... It'll be fine?”

“Ha. When I read that you were an experiment success, I recognized.....”

It seemed this girl had some talent in dealing with Mana. Artpe smirked as he had this

thought. Silpennon had to pay 210 gold to purchase the Mana Control skill book. He probably would have felt aggrieved if he knew about this. However, this was great news for Artpe.

At her sense of achievement, he gave her a toothy smile as he spoke to her.

“Yes, let’s try this together once.”

“Yes, oppa.”

Artpe showed her the way, and Sienna tried hard to follow him. As her Mana went further down the path, it was changing the density of her Mana and the light within her. Her body was also being affected by the Mana, so small changes started appearing once again.

In the end, this wasn’t a path that would end with her becoming a human. However, the path wouldn’t lead her down the path to becoming a demon either. Her free will as a human had been successfully preserved. The only thing left was for her to confront the curse that was trying to turn her into a demon. When she rejected it, she would become something new!

‘If this is successful, I pretty much have a thesis that would be a big hit in the human world and demon world...!’

However, it didn’t matter which side he revealed the information to. He couldn’t tell anyone about this, because he would become the enemy of the world. He felt aggrieved at the fact that he couldn’t reveal this information!

Artpe took out a Mana Potion, and he drank it. Then he added more fuel into controlling his Mana Strings.

He activated the Read All Creation to its limit. It revealed the path of the Mana within Sienna’s body to his eyes. He merged this path with the Mana Strings, and he sealed all the circuitry related to the demon race. Then he guided her Mana.

Her body writhed, and her hair became luminous. However, Artpe and Sienna no longer paid attention to such changes. Sienna was handling her Mana for the first time, and she was drunk on the experience. Pain couldn’t hold a candle to the joy of the Mana!

“Oppa.”

“You aren’t too far off. Just a little bit more. You need to take one more step.”

“One step... I just have to take one more step……!”

The trace energy of the demon race was slowly disappearing. As the circuitry for the demon race was sealed, a new Mana circuitry revealed itself.

It was a path that was neither human or demon. As she traveled further down the path, her Mana kept getting brighter as its constitution changed! When Artpe confirmed the changed, he unconsciously clenched his fist.

‘It’s done……! It really worked!’

“I did it, oppa!”

It was Sienna’s voice. It seemed she could also feel her curse being blocked.

In truth, he could no longer feel the energy of the Demon race within her. The only downside was the fact that he could barely feel the energy of a human from her. It was enough for her not to run afoul of the Demon King’s Innate ability!

“Kyahhkhk!”

The circuitry was now complete. It passed through her entire body, and the Mana started circulating within her body at a rapid pace. It created a noisy sound that deafened everyone’s ears.

“Ooh-ahhhhhhhhh!”

“Ooh-goo-goohk.”

Artpe groaned as he desperately observed what was going on. It was the method that would allow one to escape the curse that made one into a demon. The method that would allow him to properly fuck over the Demon King was being engraved into Sienna’s body in real time.

Above all things, It was a very valuable record. Maybe his reincarnation occurred, so he could learn this information!

In the next moment, a bright light was emitted from her body.

At the same time, a new information appeared in front of Artpe's eyes.

[Sienna]

[Level : 2]

[Race : Evil Reflector]

"Pffft."

When he found out the name of her race, he let out a laugh. Evil Reflector? How can such a childish and obvious name could exist for a race! Was it because she was born by rejecting the Demon race! It made him want to go find god. Artpe wanted to ask what he was thinking when he made the name.

Still, he was happy. He was unsure if he could be happier than what he was feeling right now. This really was the first step to destroy the ambitions possessed by the Demon King!

So this was it. This was why everyone wanted to become a hero! Artpe was feeling an emotion that clashed with him at a fundamental level, so he became self-absorbed in it. However, at that moment, someone tugged at his robe. Of course, it was Sienna.

"Oppa!"

"Yes, you did well."

Artpe was breaking out in cold sweat as he smiled. He stroked her head as he comforted her. Her skin remained pale, and her hair was white too. However, her hair was lustrous. Unlike before, she was full of life energy and magical energy.

She had white skin, and white luminous hair. Sienna looked very alien, but this actually made look very charming.

She looked a little bit younger than Maetel, and the girl let out a bright and innocent smile towards her rescuer. She had met Artpe for the first time today, but the smile contained an unlimited amount of trust towards Artpe.

“Thank you, oppa”

“It’s nothing. I gained some very good data thanks to you. I should be the one thanking you.”

“Heh heh.”

From the moment Sienna started becoming a demon to the moment where she became an Evil Reflector, he had observed and recorded everything with his Read All Creation ability. Of course, it was still impossible for him, but this record would allow him to research a method to counter the demonifying curse. He might be able to come up with a method that’ll allow him to resist against the Demon King’s ability!

“Sienna!”

“Unni.”

Artpe let go of Artpe’s robe, and she rested herself completely on the floor. She hugged her unni, who had run towards her.

Maetel had looked on with a nervous heart. She had been sad at the thought of one more child becoming a monster. Maetel and the other children were truly relieved at the sight.

“I’m glad you are fine.”

“It is all thanks to oppa. Oppa helped me.”

“.....mmmm.”

Maetel had a smile on her face. However, when she heard Sienna’s bright voice and face, she started creeping towards Artpe’s side. She grabbed his robe. There was still a smile on her face, but there was a sense of gloominess that was a small part of her expression.

“It is a relief that Sienna is fine. Right, Artpe?”

“It feels as if there is a smidge of regret in your voice, Maetel.”

“You are mistaken. I’m really happy. I want Aena and Sienna to live a happy life. At the

town... Just the two of them..."

Mmm. It seemed he hadn't been mistaken. Maetel was burning with jealousy towards a girl that was younger than her. Why was the hero wired like this! Artpe flicked Maetel's forehead as he sighed.

Anyways, the Quest was complete. He couldn't save the children that had already been turned into monsters. However, he couldn't be sad about the missed opportunity. He decided it was right to be thankful for those that he was able to save with his hands. When he had this thought, he suddenly felt fatigue wash over his mind.

".....ooh-ah. I want to rest."

"Yes, Artpe. I really want to rest too."

Artpe's words were heartfelt. Maetel let out a bitter laugh as she agreed with him. They looked at each other, and they started giggling. Then they turned to look at the children, who were staring at them in puzzlement.

"Let's go home."

"No. I want to wash myself first."

"I want to wash myself too!"

"I'm hungry!"

It seemed the fear that had gripped the children were gone thanks to Artpe's activities. As if they had made a promise beforehand, the children started expressing their desires. Soon, the communal space descended into chaos.

At that moment, a person with the all-round ability that could grant all their wishes made her entrance!

"It doesn't matter where or when. The Anywhere company is always with you. I am the merchant Mycenae! Please ask me for anything. I will fulfill your desires... Oh my?"

Mycenae and Artpe looked at each other.

Mycenae put on a charming smile, and Artpe laughed as he asked her a question.

“Ajumma, did you acquire the cleaning magic as I’ve requested?”

Chapter 39

Hero VS Kingdom (1)

Fortunately, Mycenae quickly restocked her supply of magic books after selling them in bulk to Artpe. All of them were sold to Artpe once again. It was a total of five books. She was reliable in the fact that she had acquired the Cleaning magic(45 gold).

“You guys should all gather around me. Cleaning!”

“I was cleaned in an instant!”

“My clothes are so soft and fluffy.”

This was the moment when Artpe took a step forward in becoming a lifestyle magician. Of course, a normal lifestyle magician couldn’t clean a large group of over 300 people at once. Mycenae turned pale at the sight.

“You have a really large amount of Mana. Are you around level 300?”

“I told you not to dig in too much, right?”

Artpe’s current level was 163. If he went by the standard of the Read All Creation ability, his Magic Points was above 800. It was the Magic Points he had in his previous life at level 200.

By that time, Artpe had already begun serving under the Demon King, and he had learned all the spells available. Of course, one had to take into consideration that Demon race naturally had overwhelmingly more magical energy. This was why the amount of magical energy he possessed right now was absurd.

He had been a demon in his previous life, but that was a flimsy explanation as to why he possessed so much magical right now. Artpe had been born with exceptional talent for magic, and it was at a level where the only plausible explanation was the fact that he was a hero.

If he dwelled more on that thought, it felt as if he would become conceited by it.

Therefore, he abandoned thinking about that subject. Conceit was the factor that always killed the Four Heavenly Kings! This was why he changed the subject.

“What did you do with Silpennon?”

“Even if I’m performing a scheduled task, I couldn’t stay away when the customers I am in charge of had just cleared another Dungeon. However... I’m guessing this wasn’t a run of the mill Dungeon?”

“When did ajumma became in charge of us as clients..... Well, it clearly isn’t normal.”

She was a Dungeon Merchant, but this didn’t mean she had all the information regarding the Dungeon she will visit next. The Dungeon Merchants were given permission to mobilize when a pacified Dungeon had hidden treasures.

“It’s been awhile since the Dungeon Owner was exchanged from a monster to human. He had the Dungeon barrier up..... Since he is dead, it should have dissipated.”

Mycenae looked over the children gathered in this space, and she immediately picked up on what was going on.

“Ah-ha. So that’s what they were aiming for..... Oh wow. You were able to break it up. I’ll have to revise my opinion of you again.”

“You don’t have to revise it. No, just don’t look at me at all.”

“You are too much!?”

Maetel had killed him too quickly, but the black magician was around level 100. Normally, beginner heroes shouldn’t be able to take down a level 100 being! Maetel had shown enough force to kill a level 200 with a single blow. The black magician had been unlucky in facing Maetel as an opponent.

However, even after Maetel had defeated the black magician, the monsters and the children who could turn into demons were still present. Mycenae was able to make her appearance only after Artpe got rid of all the potential risk factors.

“Customer, you surely aren’t thinking about ending our transaction after buying the spell books? I’m sure you are going to share in the Dungeon rewards with me, right?”

There were two types of Dungeons. There was the naturally occurring Dungeons and the artificial Dungeons. This Dungeon was a naturally occurring Dungeon. The magician who took over this place was proficient at black magic, but he hadn't been talented at Dungeon exploration. This was why all the secret traps and rewards remained untouched.

This was what Mycenae was aiming for. Of course, since she had been able to find the items, Artpe would be able to find them too. This was why she decided to give up on fruitlessly searching further for more items. She wanted to immediately enter into a business transaction.

"Yes, if so....."

Artpe looked at his surrounding. The level of the black magician, who had taken over this Dungeon, had to be discounted. It looked as if the original Dungeon boss had been a weak monster. Still, it wasn't as if Artpe could not find any compensation using his Read All Creation ability.

"I'm hungry."

"My stomach keeps growling."

However, there was a problem that he had to deal with before he gathered the Dungeon rewards. He looked at the children who looked as if they could drop at any moment. Artpe sighed as he threw a gold coin towards Mycenae.

"First, I want you to give them something to eat. The children were starved for couple days, so I want you to give them food that wouldn't be too much of a burden on them."

"Oh my. You are so kind. As it happens, I have a consumable item that was developed by the mage tower to be used on war refugees. However, there is a single down side....."

"I'll give you an additional gold."

"As always, thank you very much, customer!"

Mycenae distributed the items to the children with the help of Maetel and Aena.

Sienna had experienced a sudden physical change. She was changed into an existence

that didn't get hungry much. This was why Sienna helped out in the distribution. Of course, Mycenae showed interest in her.

"Oh my. You have very pretty hair."

"I want you to give me an artifact that can conceal her identity."

"I was wondering why you haven't asked me about that. You always seems to meet people of suspect origin. Or maybe those kinds of people are drawn to you?"

"Ha."

Artpe snorted at Mycenae's words as he went around the communal space. Every time he disturbed a location a wooden box would suddenly appear out of thin air or the lichen growing in the cracks of the Dungeon's wall would let out a strange light.

He went to four locations to gather the rewards, but as expected, they weren't worth much.

"It should be around 29 gold."

"Yes, here is your 29 gold. Also, this is a bonus for my dear customer."

Artpe handed off all the items, and he received a small hairpin from her. It was a metal adornment shaped like a butterfly.

"This stops the magical energy reaction from leaking out. The artifact has a very simple function, but it should be enough for the girl."

Mycenae had decided this item was enough for Sienna. Her hair and skin was unusual, but it could be dismissed as being not too out of the ordinary for a girl of her age.

"I want one Crystal Ball of Blessing."

However, Artpe had other ideas.

"You want that too!? Is it because this child is a demon?"

Mycenae was shocked. She tried to get a closer look at Sienna, but Artpe didn't allow any further inquiry. In the end, Mycenae pouted as she handed him a Crystal Ball of

Blessing for 500 gold.

“Well, this is the end to our transaction. You should head back for now.”

“How can you push me out so coldly every time like this? Still, I won’t give up. I’ll someday make you the king of the business world! You better be prepared for it!”

“Ajumma, don’t try to steal Artpe!”

“I told you to stop doing that.”

After Mycenae made another loud commotion, he put away the Crystal Ball of Blessing.

Sienna stared at him as she asked him a question

“Oppa, what is that for?”

It seemed she had become sensitive to Mana when she was turned into a Evil Reflector. It seemed she was very interested in the artifact.

Artpe let out a small laugh as he stroked her head.

“I’ll tell you about it a little bit later.”

“Yes!”

A short amount of time had passed. All the children were brought outside, and Artpe returned the children to the townspeople. In a flash, a reunion filled with tears occurred...

“Mommyyyyy!”

“Son! M... my son!”

Fortunately, most of the children taken from this particular town were all safe. The townspeople were deeply moved by the return of the children, so they started praising Artpe and Maetel. However, Artpe gave them a warning as he looked at them with serious eyes.

“If you spread our name, I’ll put a curse on all of you. The curse will turn you into

frogs.”

“Heek!”

Heroes were always targeted by repeat Quests, and these Quests would cheapen the value of their names! Of course, the Demon King had created a perfect recipe in the past where these repeat Quests helped along the explosive growth of the hero as an unintended consequence. However, the current situation differed quite a lot from the past.

Since he was now aware of the fact that Demon King was hatching such a horrifying plan, they would have to move carefully. A disguise and a mask was a must. They also had to be prepared to bury such fake identities in the darkness.

“The problem is.....”

Artpe gave a stern warning then he turned around. There were still couple hundred children left.

“Hyung, I want to see my mom too.”

“B... be quiet. We shouldn’t cause more trouble for the magician-nim!”

“Heeng. Mom. Mommy~”

He had no problem with the children who were originally from this town. However, he wondered what he should do with the children captured from the other towns.

Of course, they would have to be returned to their own towns. If he was like the heroes from the old stories, he wouldn’t have hesitated. He would have personally returned the children to each town. However, the Quest had ended, so he needed to move onto his next goal.

.....this kind of event always led to a more annoying and larger incidents. The Demon King’s scheme always seemed to come in succession!

Of course, the Demon King was a chef that tried to get a richer flavor by cooking an already seared meat once again..... Artpe was well aware of the Demon King’s far-reaching recipes, so he was annoyed at being at the receiving end of it!

‘I have to nip this in the bud. It would be stupid of me to be satisfied with leaving the matter as is when I know more will come from this. Moreover...’

In the end, Artpe came to a firm resolution.

If he let his heart make the decision, he would have ended his association with the townspeople here. He wanted to go rest. However, if he didn’t tie this up right now, he knew he would become more exhausted by what stemmed from this event in the future.

“You guys should move your town.”

In the end, a suggestion popped out of his mouth. The townspeople became dumbfounded at his words.

“You want us to move our town? Why? No, how?”

“I’ll be going around to the towns where these children are from. I’ll be gathering all the townspeople from there. I want to consolidate everyone into forming a large town. You guys will create a small city.”

“W... we can’t do that!”

“That’ll be too hard!”

“We are already living a hard life here!”

He expected their objections. However, Artpe’s attitude didn’t change.

“If you want your children to be stolen again, you can continue on living here. You all have to stick together right now. You have to stick together to grow your numbers. You won’t be able to win against a country, but at the very least, you will have grown your own presence. You have to be large enough where many people will become aware it if something happens to you.”

If enough humans were gathered in a single location, it might have an effect on other entities. It would be hard for the Archduke to mess with them.

It would also make it harder for the Demon King’s army to hatch a scheme. They were able to gather and put a curse on the children as experiments, because they were able

to steal the children in secret.

“I... if we move our residences, how are we going to feed ourselves?”

“You already had a hard time making a living here. Do you think much will change if you move? You’ll either farm or hunt for game. That isn’t my problem.”

Artpe had other things to do. He had to ruin the Archduke. Furthermore, he had to ruin the black magicians that were messing with the entire country.

At the climax of this Quest, couple Demons would probably make their appearances. However, he was confident that he could kill them. Maetel had awoken to her Innate ability. It would be possible to do so with her help!

‘I’ll have to ruin a kingdom before I kill the Demon King. Mmmm. All right. I kind of feel like a Four Heavenly King again.’

He couldn’t shake the feeling that something was out of joint. However, this actually made him quite happy.

Maetel looked at him with unshakable trust, and Sienna looked up at him as if he was her idol. Aena and the numerous children looked on with worried eyes. The townspeople looked to be in a state of shock and fear at Artpe’s forceful order.

“Well, we’ll start our city construction plan from this point on!”

It was at that moment when the first Quest turned into a succession of scenario Quest.

Chapter 40

Hero VS Kingdom (2)

Under Artpe's unexpected edict, the townspeople made preparations to leave. They were close to tears. Since they had given up most of their fortunes to Artpe (there wasn't much aside from Obsidian of Greed), so they only had to pack some clothes.

"We'll sleep here tonight, and we'll head out immediately tomorrow. I want all of you to take care of the children until then."

"Understood, magician-nim."

"Ho-ooh. I know magician-nim isn't wrong, but the prospect of building a new house is frustrating....."

It would have been better if they had grounds to dismiss Artpe's claims as total nonsense. However, Artpe had brought back the children even when he wasn't given much as a reward. This was why they decided to pin their trust upon him...

This was why they continued their preparation for their big migration even as they shed tears. Their hearts burned as if they had eaten mustard. Still, it was better to be worked like a dog than actually being dead.

"I'll see you tomorrow, oppa!"

"Good night, noona!"

"Hoo-uhng, ooh-uh-uhng. Mommy."

Of course, Artpe knew their pain. How could he not?

He watched the townspeople break up as they shuttled the crying children away.

'If they do band together to grow in size, there's a chance they'll be able to escape the influence of the demons. Of course, when that occurs they'll try to find other ways to

acquire more children... ,... ’

Artpe and Maetel’s role was to stop this business from getting any larger. He would overlook most calamities. However, he had to get in on this or it might swallow the whole human world.

“This is the hero’s walk of life. If not for heroes, others wouldn’t be able to sense such enormous crisis, and they wouldn’t know how to overcome it. It isn’t as if the human world doesn’t have strong people. However, the trouble makers are hidden until the heroes can find them. It is like a game of hide and seek.”

When the hero finds them, they proudly reveal themselves as if to say ‘I’m ready now!’

They were sons of bitches amongst sons of bitches.

“Do you think this is happening in other regions, Artpe?”

“I hope not, but it is possible. This is why this is so annoying.”

At Artpe’s reply, Maetel’s eyes turned menacing. Since this was a problem where his safety wasn’t involved, he had expected her to laugh off most of his words. She had a very forgiving nature, yet her face was filled with rage right now.

“We have to beat them up. Everyone who tries to make children into monsters are bad!”

It seemed her mental attitude had gone through a fundamental change after what she experienced within the Dungeon. Artpe was bitter and happy about it at the same time. Still, he had to calm her down right now.

“You shouldn’t work yourself up too much, Maetel... You’ll see much worse in the future.”

Maetel didn’t reply to his words. She extended her hand to firmly grip his sleeve. He extended a hand to stroke her head. At that moment, another girl grabbed his other sleeve.

It was none other than Sienna.

“Oppa. Oppa should come to our house and sleep.”

“Yes, magician-nim. Our humble... It is a very humble house, but if you don’t mind, we will take you in for the night.”

Maetel sent a guarded look towards the two girls. The hand that had been petting her head suddenly turned into a light blow to her head with his knuckles.

“Ouch.”

While Maetel gripped her head in pain, Artpe grabbed Sienna’s offered hand as he gave his reply.

“We’ll impose ourselves on you guys for a day. As it happens, I have something I have to give you.”

“Really? Yes!”

Sienna let out an innocent laugh as she rejoiced.

Artpe couldn’t help but laugh alongside with her.

He would have to sweet talk another girl with a plausible story.

This was how he came to reside in the two girl’s house for a night. They had lost their parents, so the two girls lived in a very small and old house. It was in disrepair. It would actually be much less work to build a new hut than repair this one.

After he unpacked his gear, Artpe called for Sienna. He gave her a small crystal ball. It was none other than the Crystal Ball of Blessing.

“Here, take it. This is yours.”

“Oppa, you bought it for me!?”

Sienna hadn’t figured out the exact use of the Crystal Ball of Blessing yet. However she was sensitive to Mana after she became an Evil Reflector. This was why she was aware that a very complex structure of Mana was contained within the Crystal Ball of Blessing.

“Oppa, isn’t this really expensive?”

“I’m not giving it to you for free. You have to repay me later with a lot of interests. It’ll be a compound interest.”

“Yes, I understand!”

Since she didn’t know how scary compound interest was, Sienna let out a naive smile as she replied. She took the crystal from him. Soon, she had a slightly peculiar expression on her face.

“Oppa, it feels as if it is exploring inside me.”

“It is a substitute for the priests, and it’ll decide your future path. It’ll make a record of you in this world. You’ll know when it adapts to you.”

“Y... yes.”

After awakening as an Evil Reflector, she had already learned the Mana Control. Of course, he expected her to receive the Magician Class without much problem

However...

[Sienna]

[Level ? 1]

[Evil Reflector]

[Warrior Priestess]

“.....?”

“.....?”

Sienna found out her Class, and when he saw it, Artpe’s eyes turned round. Maetel and Aena didn’t know what was going on so they looked on absentmindedly. The only thing different was the fact that the crystal ball was now glinting.

It would probably be of help in advancing in her high rank Class..... No, that wasn’t important right now!

“Oppa, what happened……?”

“I’m not sure either.”

If she wasn’t a magician, who on this land was actually suited to become a mage! Moreover, she had escaped her humanity to become a new race that didn’t exist in history, yet she was a priestess!

Artpe was so taken aback by this that he wanted to run out of the house. However, his Read All Creation ability hadn’t malfunctioned. Instead, her record as a Warrior Priestess was shown clearly in front of his eyes. There was no doubt Sienna was a Warrior Priestess!

Sienna firmly grabbed Artpe’s clothes as she asked him a question.

“Oppa, does this mean I have to enter into a temple?”

“You must never do that.”

At Sienna’s naive question, Artpe gave an immediate answer. Even if a Warrior Priestess was an occupation welcomed by everyone, she wasn’t human anymore. There was no way she would be able to enter into the very close-minded temples. If Artpe thought about their temperament, it would be fortunate if Sienna wasn’t dissected for study.

Priests weren’t priests, because they had a good heart. Priests followed a specific way of training that had been passed down through time. People had researched a way to suck up to selfish gods in an attempt to obtain a boon from them. This was how they awakened to the holy power to become priests!

This was why she was in an impossible situation.

‘Her Mana has progressed in a special direction. It’s a holy power that directly opposes evil... It is a likely hypothesis.’

The name of her race was Evil Reflector, and the name was quite explicit. It also outlined the direction of her development. She had been optimized to fight against the demon race. She was so amazing that it wouldn’t have been strange if she had been chosen as hero.

He wonder what would happen if she was given the opportunity to grow up. She was born from an experiment that had tried to turn her into a demon. She would now stand in the front line in defeating the Demon race. It was the biggest way to screw over the Demon King. Moreover, it would allow Artpe's original goal to.....

".....Sienna."

Artpe felt a small amount of self-hatred as he bit his lips. However, he had already handed over the Crystal Ball of Blessing to her, so he was being hypocritical by wavering between his decision. He kept eye contact with Sienna as he spoke.

"You probably lived a normal life until now. If this incident hadn't occurred, you would have continued to live a normal life. However, the direction of your life has changed in no uncertain terms. In the process, you gained considerable amount of power and potential. Now that you have that power it'll be hard for you to lead a normal life."

At the very least, it wouldn't be possible until the disturbance caused by the Demon King could be put to sleep. Sienna was a very bright child, so she fully understood what Artpe was talking about.

"Yes. Thank you, oppa. I also want to live a different life. I want to become stronger like oppa. I don't want to be abused by bad people any longer."

It was truly courageous words. Artpe wonder if what she experienced here had hardened her heart.

Maybe, her mental state was affected when she was changed into a new race. He just had to hope that he had led her down a better path than becoming a demon...

"The problem is the power you possess is different from theirs. The power is unique and alien. This is the reason why I gave you the Crystal Ball of Blessing. People are afraid of those that are different from them. You'll probably be unable to display your full power out in the open."

"Oppa, what should I do?"

She went to the heart of the matter. As Sienna asked her question, it seemed she had an idea what the answer would be. This was why there was a look of anticipation on her face.

This was why kids these days were scary. Artpe had this thought as he turned to look at Maetel. It looked as if Maetel really didn't like the current situation. In the end, she nodded with a sullen expression on her face.

She didn't want someone else to get between Artpe and her. However, Maetel knew Sienna couldn't be left behind now. Since her feelings were so transparent, it was a bit amusing to see it.

Artpe smirked as he turned to look at Sienna.

Then he suggested a way forward for her.

".....do you want to join our party?"

"Yes!"

As if she had been waiting for this question, she let out a bright smile as she gave her answer. Artpe had asked the question, but he was taken aback by her embarrassingly frank answer.

".....your whole life depends on this decision. Are you sure you ok making such a decision so easily?"

"Yes!"

"You can't!"

At that moment, Aena interjected herself into the conversation as she screeched. She had finally been able to recover her younger sister, yet she was now worried that Sienna would go to a distant place. However, Sienna had anticipated her unni's objection, so she spoke with a bright smile on her face.

"Unni, don't worry too much about it. I'm all right. As time passes, I'll feel much better."

"Sienna....."

"If you are with me, I'm sure it'll become difficult for you. You saw it, unni. I'm not normal anymore."

As her words ended, a white magical energy was emitted at the tip of Siennna's fingers.

Artpe could clearly see a light that was similar to holy power. Moreover, the amount of magical energy possessed by her was disparate from her status as a level 1.

“I... I...”

“Unni. You can do this alone too, right?”

Aena’s expression darkened, but Sienna’s expression remained clear. There was a thread of resoluteness that could be seen in her bright smile. Aena realized Sienna wasn’t trying to convince her of anything. She was just notifying Aena of what would be happening.

Sienna had always been a fierce girl that spoke her mind.

“We won’t be apart forever. I’ll come back. I promise. So you have to wait for me. Ok?”

“Sienna... Are you really going to come back to me?”

In the end, Aena declared her defeat. Sienna let out a bright laughter as she tightly hugged Aena.

“Yes, I promise.”

“Sienna……!”

“This is quite a nice sight, so I’m sorry to have to say this. We are going to travel together until this Quest ends.”

“Ah. That’s right.”

Artpe poured vinegar on the situation. The two sisters had embarrassed expressions on their faces. Maetel giggled.

The night came to an end in a town that’ll be gone tomorrow.

Chapter 41

Hero VS Kingdom (3)

He had a dream.

It was a land of despair where everything was dyed with blood and darkness. He stood face to face with her on top of a castle wall made through the pain and suffering of people.

No, it was a too one-sided encounter to call it a face to face meeting.

Artpe had already lost to the hero. All his magic spells had been blocked by their magician. He had thrown his daggers in desperation, but an archer with long ears destroyed all of them with her sharp arrows.

Normally, his subordinates were lazy, and they had treated his authority as their commanding general as shit. However, they acted in a way that was incongruous to their past actions. His subordinates fought desperately to protect him, but in the end, they were easily slain by the warrior's great sword. If they had always done well as they did right now, their actions wouldn't have felt sudden and unexpected to Artpe. They decided to act in such a way at the last moment, and it almost brought tears to Artpe's eyes.

"Don't do it. Wait a moment. Don't swing that."

"Hero....."

The steel knight, who never took off his helmet, refused to stop. He was about to sever Artpe's head. However, the hero desperately halted his action.

All the other members inside the hero's party let out a sigh at the same time. The hero paid no attention to them as she stepped forward. She made a sincere entreaty towards Artpe.

"Please don't cause any trouble, and surrender to us, Four Heavenly King Artpe Hirtana Kelduke. There is no need for us to fight each other any longer."

“Hero! You!”

“It is impossible.”

“Everyone be quiet…… Please surrender yourself.”

Artpe hadn't been hostile towards the hero from the beginning. She was the only one that was aware of this fact. Artpe had watched over the hero for a very long time, and she was aware of this fact too. If Artpe had wanted to, the hero knew he could have killed her a long time ago.

This was why they could be on the same side. She was sure they could be on the same side. They……

“You speak as if the Demon King's army isn't on a campaign to bring peace to the world.”

However, Artpe made light of the hero's words as he mocked her. His sharp purple eyes were half hidden by his drooping black hair. It wasn't just the hero. His eyes twinkled as if he was mocking the entire hero's party.

“Why……?”

She asked the question as if she couldn't understand him. However, Artpe didn't give her an answer.

He didn't want to stop the hero's steps. A heavy burden was already on her slender shoulders, and he didn't want to add more to her burden.

Instead, he tried to relax her contorted face a little bit. He let out a grin as he opened his mouth.

““Hero. I'm pretty sure a very good looking noonim will be coming here soon, and she'll be very angry when she sees my corpse. I want you to give her this message.”

His words were very comedic when one considered it to be his last words. It made the hero's face scrunch up. Unlike her, the members of the hero's party thought Artpe was scheming to screw over the hero. This was why they started moving before Artpe could finish his skit.

The Warrior unsheathed and gripped his great sword. The magician held a staff that looked too heavy for her even if she was holding it with both hands. She prepared a spell. The archer pointed an arrow towards Artpe. The red haired thief rushed towards Artpe with his daggers drawn.

They all treasured the hero above all else. They wanted to shield her from the fucked up truths that dominated the world.

“Don’t try to confuse her, Four Heavenly King.”

“In truth, I... Kuh-huhk!”

The dagger scored a clean hit. Artpe had already exhausted his magical energy, and his defensive gear were all broken. His consumable artifacts were all used up. Artpe could no longer put up a fight, so he exposed his heart to the dagger of the thief.

Yes, he already knew this would happen.

“In truth, I’m not too fond of older women... Kahk. Please tell her...!”

His vision was being dyed black. He could feel Etna’s Mana swell from afar. She was the commander of the Army of Thieves.

‘Ah, if I was going to die anyways, I shouldn’t have called noo-nim here.’

He had such useless thoughts as he died.

“This makes you... It makes you seem like a normal person...!”

He could hear the tearful voice of the hero as he was at death’s door. Her voice somehow made his chest burn.

However, he couldn’t turn back the time. This was a story that had already ended.

This was how his previous life came to an end.

Artpe’s Innate ability had reversed the world, and he opened his eyes from within a small human body. He wanted to hurry up and wake up from the nightmare that rehashed the past events.....

“No…… Nooooooooooooooooooooo!”

He heard a female’s scream. It was the voice that he had heard during the last moments of his previous life.

Wait a moment.

Who’s voice of despair was it……?

“……ah.”

Artpe opened his eyes. His ears were deafened by the sound. It was the worst kind of nightmare.

He had a harsh expression on his face as he tried to get up. However, his body was strangely heavy, so he looked down. Maetel and Sienna had fallen asleep from exhaustion after they had a territorial fight over his abdomen.

He looked to the side, and he saw Aena who had gotten up early. She glared at him with white eyes. She was looking at him as if he was a convicted criminal.

“……well, I’m popular. What can I do about it?”

“Hmmp!”

Aena’s cheeks were puffed out as she quickly turned her head away. Artpe let out a bitter laugh when he saw her. Then he woke up the two brats that clung to him like koalas. It was time to head out now.

When the morning brightened, the townspeople and the children were led out the town by Artpe and Maetel. Since all of them had packs on their backs, it looked as if they were refugees. Fortunately, it was late spring, so the weather was mild.

“Mmm. We are quite noticeable. That’s great…”

“Isn’t it bad if we are noticed, Artpe?”

Maetel tilted her head in puzzlement as she asked the question. Artpe let out a light laugh as he gave an explanation.

“That only applies when we are exploring a Dungeon where we have no idea if strong enemies are present or not. However, we know that there are only level 100 cast offs inside this region. This is why it would be more convenient if they scouted and came towards us.”

“I see!”

When their enemies caught sight of the group, they would immediately attack the party. In such a scenario, Maetel would be able to cut them down without being repulsed by what she had to do.

Artpe didn't explain any further as he expanded his Mana Threads into a wide net. This wasn't something like feeling an ominous feeling when one was being watched or ambushed. He would be able to know who was going to attack him. At the very least, it would allow him to prepare a counterattack.

As he controlled a massive amount of Mana, he directed a question towards the nearby Village Person A.

“So which village is closest to this location?”

“The village doesn't have an official name... If we go past that hill, we'll be there.”

The town didn't have a name. These towns were so unimportant that it would probably not be recorded in the hero's chronicle. They went to several of these villages as they gathered more people. Moreover, they cleared out all the soldiers and black magicians they encountered...

The Quest Reward would continue to bottom out.

The thought of it made him sad. However, even if the Quest Reward was garbage now, he had to go through it to get to the next stage of this Quest. This was the charm of a chained Quest, so he had to endure it.

‘Still, I hope this ends before the summer of this year. I want to avoid what always occurs in the fall.....’

If he went by the schedule, they had plenty of time. They would have enough time even if they ran in place going nowhere for four years. Even if such delays occurred, Maetel would probably learn skills like Jump and all the techniques associated with it. She

was scary like that.

The problem right now was the fact that the world and the monsters changed depending on the seasons. There were monsters that were calm in the spring, and they would cause trouble in the summer. Then there were the monsters that attacked after the fall harvest in the winter. They attacked to steal the food of the humans. Artpe was trying to proceed on a specific route, and there were those on this route that would be affected by the seasons...

‘If Silpennon is able to grow up quickly, I can use him. No, it might be faster to develop this one.’

On one side of him, a lovely white-haired girl was grabbing onto his sleeve like Maetel. He smirked as he looked down at her.

She was skilled enough to control her Mana, and under his tutelage, she was emitting a white colored Mana. She was moving it around with one hand. Her skill level was better than him in his previous life. She had ridiculous amount of potential. Why were there only geniuses around him!

The genius pouted as she looked up at Artpe.

“This is tiring, oppa.”

“Mana is nature. If you accept nature as being Mana, nature will soon become one with your Mana. It will fill you up.”

“Ok. I’ll try harder.”

Demons possessed overwhelming more Mana compared to humans. After consuming Mana, Demons also had a much faster recovery time. The reason for this difference was the fact that the Demon race looked at Mana in a fundamentally different way than humans.

No matter how much he explained it, humans were unable to understand the perspective seen by the Demon race. There were magicians in historical records that were barely able to understand this truth after many years. This foundation allowed them to be able to compete against Demons.

In his past life, the magician from the hero’s party understood this perspective. It was

thanks to this magician that the Demon race's strongholds in the human world was all brought down. Any Demon that got in her way had died. In truth, Artpe was more afraid of the magician than the hero in his previous life.

"Ah. It quickened a little bit. Oppa, it is as if the Mana is smiling at me!"

".....yes, I see. So that's how it is."

In this life, it seemed there would be at least one more terrifying prodigy that would be on par with that magician.

Artpe wonder why such a monster-like prodigy like Sienna hadn't made a name for herself in his previous life.

He stroked the head of the girl that was smiling brightly at him.

"Ughhhh, Artpe. I..... I want to learn Mana....."

"Maetel, you are already pretty good at handling Mana....."

In short order, they arrived at the first town. The town had been in a rut, since they had lost all their children. They rejoiced when they saw the safely returned children. They also cried for the children that would never make it back to them. Then they became shocked at Artpe's edict to leave their town.

"I... I can't do this!"

"Of course, you saved my child, so I'll give you compensation as thanks. However, I can't abandon the village....."

"We won't force you to do this. However, if you all continue to live like this, the soldiers will steal your children once again. Shall I give you more bad news? They won't hesitate to torture you for information regarding my party. They will kill several of you as an example."

"O... our king would never....."

"There is a different king on the throne."

"W... what!?"

The people discussed the topic in a heated fashion, and sides were formed. The people that lost then recovered their children followed Artpe and Maetel's lead. The rest stayed behind. Since the children obediently followed Artpe and Maetel, the townspeople decided to put their trust in them.

"If the soldiers come asking questions, you guys tell them everything you saw here."

"I... if we do that, magician-nim will..."

"It's all right. You tell them everything. You can even tell me what I'm trying to accomplish. It is better than you guys dying just because you hid the information."

"Magician-nim.....!"

The people remaining behind in the town had rejected Artpe, yet he was being considerate towards them!

Of course, he didn't think the soldiers would let the townspeople live even if the townspeople told them everything. However, Artpe had given them a fighting chance. He had done enough for these idiots who had basically forfeited their lives, because they were afraid of change.

It took several days, but Artpe's party toured all the nearby villages. Most towns reacted similarly to each other, and the people who lost their children showed strong feelings towards Artpe.

"My child! What happened to my child!"

"You did it! I bet you killed my child!"

Artpe understood their rage, so he didn't get mad. Maetel had been restless over the situation, and she had done well holding herself back until now. However, her composure broke when she met the parents of the dead children.

"No, it isn't like that. When we found the children, they were already....."

"That's enough, Maetel."

They were unfairly placing the blame on Artpe. Maetel had emerged from this tragedy alongside him, so it would have been weird if Maetel wasn't agitated by the current

situation.

However, the truth would place the people in more danger. If townspeople decided to stay behind, they were told the children were kidnapped, and some had died under unfortunate circumstances.

He left it at that.

“I was too late to save them. I’m very sorry. I have no excuses.”

Artpe spoke only those words. Deception and disdain were necessary skills for the Four Heavenly King, but he briefly put away those skills. Right now he had to use an essential skill used by swindlers. He pushed forward with his version of the story. There were omissions, so he wasn’t technically lying.

It was enough.

“Eek. Eeeeeek.....”

“Koo-hoohk..... We already know you aren’t at fault. However, if we accept that as fact then who should we hate!”

“Hoohk..... My baby... My baby.....!”

In the end, many people rejected Artpe’s offer. He was a being that possessed mysterious powers, and that fact was enough for to be ostracised by them.

On the other hand, the people who accepted his help stuck very close to him. Artpe had to be satisfied with that fact.

Still, Maetel’s heart hurt as she took in everything.

“Artpe.”

“No one here is at fault, Maetel. The people who are dishing out the hate and the people who are receiving the hate aren’t at fault. Sometimes screwed up situations like this occurs. In truth, this is some of what happens in real life.”

The war in his previous life was similar. Even if the Demons didn’t want to fight, they had no choice thanks to the Innate ability of the Demon King. A kindhearted girl had

to repeatedly fight horrific battles just because fate had chosen her to be the hero.

What happened in her past life was about to be repeated in her present life. He had no other words he could say except that it was screwed up.

“Ooh-ooooo. All right.”

Maetel understood the meaning behind his words, so she suppressed her emotions. This in turn increased the frequency of her sneaking into his arms when he slept. Sienna unnecessarily burned with a strong sense of rivalry, so she stuck close to Artpe too. It just made Artpe exhausted.

There were a lot of words and troubles exchanged, but all the people were gathered in a week. There were around 2,000 people gathered.

It took them an additional two days to search for a land that would be suitable for them to live on. They ended up at the mid-slope of a hill where monsters rarely appeared.

“So are we supposed to build the town here, magician-nim? No, I guess we have to call it a small city.”

“There are two thousand people here. I wonder if this many people can really live here.....”

“I’ll help you build your city. Don’t worry too much about it.”

A large number of people came here, because they looked up toward Artpe and Maetel. It looked as if Artpe felt a bit abashed when he scratched his nose as he spoke. However, his inner thought differed a little bit from his outward appearance.

‘Since I’ve made a bait this large, a large fish should be biting it soon.’

This was how the city construction started.

The fish became aware of this without delay.

Chapter 42

Hero VS Kingdom (4)

There were 2,000 people, but a thousand of them were children who couldn't work. Still, they were making great progress in carving out a small city at the middle of the small mountain. All the tasks that couldn't be done through the power of the people was solved by Artpe. Of course, he used his Mana Strings.

"T... the mountain is collapsing."

"It is being pulverized."

"The forest..... An entire forest is being swallowed up....."

The Mana Strings consumed a lot of Mana. However, the large consumption rate became a problem only in battle where every minute and every second mattered. Since no one had chased after them yet, he had plenty of time. He had the luxury to be able to use the Mana Strings to his heart's content. This was possible because his Mana recovery rate had increased compared to his days as a Demon.

Artpe used his Mana Strings every time his Mana recovered. He carved the mountain, dug up the ground or he processed the trees. He had had cut down the forest in its entirety.

Naturally, the townspeople started looking up to Artpe as if he was like a godlike figure.

"He isn't human."

"I've seen magicians before, but they weren't like this."

"Did you just see that? He extended his hand once, and twenty trees just fell."

When the large-scale construction came to an end, the townspeople firmed the ground, and they started gathering the fallen trees to create building materials. They were doing minor tasks compared to what Artpe was doing. This resulted in a city

being created at an incredible speed.

The ground was flattened in a half-day, and buildings started going up after another half-day. The people that weren't of help in the construction were given the task of gathering food. They were sent out into the mountain.

Just the same, Artpe filled up the food stores when they didn't bring back enough.

How did he do so?

"Customer, who do you think I am!"

He did it through the veteran merchant Mycenae of the Anywhere company.

"You are someone convenient to use in various situations."

"If you were a little bit more circumspect with your words, I might have agreed with your sentiment!"

"Ah. I want you to leave behind your cheapest rations. I need enough for 3,000 meals. Tsk. I don't have much money left after purchasing the Crystal Ball of Blessing... I'll have to empty out another Dungeon soon."

"You just straight up ignored my words....."

Dungeon merchants rarely appeared outside of a normal Dungeon. The rules changed a little bit when one bought a voucher from them. It was possible for one to trade with a Dungeon merchant outside.

In this particular case, Maetel and Artpe had cleared out the Dungeon located within this mountain. Mycenae found out about it since she designated herself as the merchant in charge of dealing with them. She had shown up like a phantom that was haunting them, and Artpe had pulled her outside of the Dungeon to make a deal.

"You are young, yet I've never met a customer with so little manners. In five years, I'm sure you will make many women cry thanks to your unruly heart."

"I'll probably be the one crying. Maetel would have beaten me with a club before it could reach that point."

“Hmmm.”

Mycenae narrowed her eyes as she glared at him.

“As expected, you like her?”

“Are you trying to meddle in the love life of a customer?”

“If you don’t have particular feeling towards her, I might put some of my spit on you to call dibs.”

“By the time I grow up, the spit you put on me would have dried up, and there would be no trace of it left.”

Artpe snorted when he saw Mycenae’s ears flutter around. If one took compliments from merchants at face value, it’ll lead one to bankruptcy in the end.

However, his face hardened a little bit at her next words.

“I really want to hold the title of being a lover of a hero at least once.”

For a brief moment, Artpe froze in place when he heard her words. Should he dodge the statement? Should he deny it? He mulled over it, but there was only one answer he could give from the start.

She wasn’t fishing for information. She was sure of her own claim. He had always had a feeling in the past that Mycenae knew about their status as heroes. If he denied the claim, it would cause unnecessary difficulties for both sides.

In the end, Artpe shrugged his shoulders as he replied towards Mycenae.

“That’s right. We were quite skillful in keeping it a secret up until now.”

“Of course, However, I’ve already realized it from the outset. Haven’t our meetings been quite coincidental after our first meeting? I tried very hard not to unnecessarily arouse your attention.”

“Why are you bringing this up right now?”

He had a decent idea on why, but Artpe spoke in a sullen manner. Mycenae chuckled

as she spoke.

“I believe you have a modicum of trust in me now. I want to establish a firm cooperative relationship. Moreover... You already know this, right? It doesn't matter which Dungeon you enter. I drop everything I have going on to beat all the other merchants in showing up in front of you. It was my way of keeping both your identities a secret. In truth, I deserve thanks for doing such a task.”

“Didn't you do it to monopolize the trades with us, since we are heroes with bright futures? Wasn't it an attempt to increase your profit?”

“Of course, that is my ultimate goal.”

Mycenae boldly acknowledged that fact. Then she added more to her explanation.

“However, I also do not want the Demon King to take over the world. This is why I tried my best to protect the two heroes from being solicited by unnecessary people. It is a task where my practical interests and doing the right thing intersects.”

“Hmmm.....”

“In truth, I confirmed my suspicions when I saw all of this today.”

Mycenae spoke as she pointed towards the construction site of the small city. A large number of people were embarking on a new life. Everyone thought the construction of the city would be difficult, but Artpe's complete support had made the job much easier. Thanks to his help there were very few people that complained.

“I thought you only went around smashing Dungeons, but you are doing very hero-like tasks. Every person here has absolute trust in you, and they rely on you. This also made me confident that I could trust and rely on you, customer.”

“It is very unexpected to hear such words from a Dungeon Merchant. Don't you guys put profit above all else?”

“All the more reason to put my trust in you”

Mycenae let out an alluring laugh as she spoke.

“Customers like you let out an always radiant light, and many people get tangled in

that light. It isn't a coincidence that heroes are the bane of the Demon King, In a chaotic world, the only ones able to bring the hearts of the people together are the heroes."

"Hoong."

Heroes unite the hearts of the people? Heroes weren't religious leaders. If one discounted their abilities, heroes were normal human beings. Other people did as they liked by relying on the heroes. It was a one-sided and disgusting relationship. He didn't have such a relationship with the people here, so it seemed she was under some delusion.

".....yes, it would be convenient to have someone I can trust too."

However, Artpe didn't have to go out of his way to shatter such delusions. She could package her sweet words in every which way, but in the end, it was a business relations.

This was why this relationship had to be based strictly on profits and losses. Emotions didn't have to enter into the calculations. He erased the countless thoughts he had been thinking. He let out a light laugh as he extended his hand towards Mycenae.

"Soul Contract. I'm sure you came here prepared with one."

"Of course. I had a very hard time, since the efficacy of the contract had to be high. I had a very hard time coming up with a story for the headquarters of the company....."

"A cost of the contract is usually split between the two parties. However, since you've suggested it first, you should take on an additional 10% of the cost. I'll pay 40%."

"Your calculations are always precise....."

Mycenae pouted as she brought out the contract. Artpe put his index finger on it, and he dragged it across the contract. The basic outline of the contract had already been created. As his fingers scanned over the contract, conditions were modified, added and deleted.

"It isn't just me. You are forbidden to talk about anyone I deem to be an ally. From this point on, that will be Maetel, Sienna, Silpennon, Leseti and me."

"However, once you start encountering more and more people, there is a danger of me

being in breach of contract without meaning to.”

“If it is a situation where they will find out even if you don’t open your mouth, the contract will make the proper judgement. If you are careful with your words and actions, you won’t be in breach of contract.”

“Then I needed something that would count as profit for me. I want you to sell 10% of the items you gain in Dungeons exclusively to me.”

“Of course, Maetel and any of my other party members have to agree to sell it to you. It has to be a unanimous decision. Also, I won’t sell any items that I choose not to sell to you to other merchants. If you don’t have the purchasing power, you have to find a suitable owner to sell the items to.”

“Since this is an exclusive contract, could you give me a grace period to come up with the funds? Moreover, the 3rd Clause must.....”

Artpe and Mycenae pitted their heads against each other with the contract between them. They were precise in their calculations, and they double checked each clause. The townspeople were busy constructing the city, but when they caught sight of the young magician, they thought he was quite talented in picking up women.

“.....also, I have an additional addendum.”

In a flash, Mycenae raised her head from the contract to look at Artpe. When he met her eyes, her eyes were very serious. They were clear and deep. He was a bit surprised by them. He wondered if the conversation up until now had been a set up for this moment.

“What is it?”

“The place is a bit far from the Diaz kingdom, but..... Does customer know about the Forest of Eternity?”

“It is located on the border of Duchy of Tiata. It is the place of origin for the Elves. Isn’t it centered around the World Tree?”

“.....as expected, you know about it. I heard you guys were in a country town before both of you were chosen as heroes. So how are you so knowledgeable?”

Mycenae let out a sigh at Artpe's words. He let out a bitter laugh when he caught a hint of irritation in her sigh.

The information regarding the Forest of Eternity weren't widespread amongst humans. The residents of the forest were zealous in protecting their location. They had cut off all communications with the outside world. It was as Artpe had said. The residents were none other than Elves.

"Then do you perhaps know what the Forest of Eternity is facing right now?"

"I can make a guess. The friction between the Duchy and the forest might have worsened. A country that covets the Elves might have sent out an organized group. The monsters might be causing more mayhem. The World Tree might be drying up. Maybe, all of these events are the reason why the Forest of Eternity is being ruined."

"You are absolutely correct. It is all of the above. The Forest of Eternity is in overall distress. If things continue to head in this direction, it'll be in ruins soon. It will all be thanks to those that thinks with their lower body instead of their brains!"

Elves were beautiful. It was said that they were born from the vital force of the World Tree, and they were beautiful enough to be called fairies. It was just amongst humans. They were considered to be one of the most beautiful races amongst races that were capable of rational thought. Of course, many people desired them.

"Amongst the smut that is circulated within the kingdom, 80% of them deals with Elves."

"Men are the worst……!"

If people were just reading books about Elves, it could be considered to be charming. However, in the past, countless number of people trespassed into the Forest of Eternity to kidnap Elves. The Elves had to fight against them over the long years. This was why Elves spat on the ground when other races were brought up.

"The manhood of Orcs and human men should be severed."

Mycenae grinded her teeth as she spoke. She expressed her anger as her ears fluttered fiercely. Artpe couldn't help but chuckle. She was speaking very serious words, so he didn't get why she looked so cute right now.

Artpe wasn't into older women, yet she had just delivered an effective blow on Artpe. Sadly, Mycenae was too incensed to realize this fact. He lightly slapped his cheek with one hand. He took in deep breaths as he opened his mouth.

"It can't be helped. However, you guys always managed to hang in there."

".....that's true. We've managed to hold out until now."

Mycenae nodded her head. Since Artpe wasn't going to hide the fact that he was a hero, she didn't plan on hiding the fact that she was an Elf. To be more specific, she was a Dark Elf.

In truth, she possessed a powerful presence. Even Silpennon was able to pick up on this fact. Artpe possessed Observation magic that was ranked higher than what she possessed. There was no way he hadn't picked up on her true identity.

"However, it has gotten worse recently. It really seems like something is happening within the forest. Unfortunately, I was reduced into becoming a Dark Elf, so it'll be difficult to give direct help to the forest....."

"The World Tree is really petty. Whenever one of you makes a little mistake, it reduces them into Dark Elves."

"I... it isn't the World Tree's fault. It was because I was inexperienced! Anyways, that isn't important. It is the Forest of Eternity."

Artpe narrowed his eyes when she finally broached the main subject.

Mycenae looked straight into his eyes as she made a sincere request.

"At some time in the future, could you accept my Quest which is related to the Forest of Eternity?"

"All right. You should also put that into the contract."

"What.....?"

Artpe had agreed to it so easily that Mycenae was taken aback.

"Is it ok for you to accept it so easily? I'm not sure I should be saying this, but the

situation within the Forest of Eternity is very dire. It might get very dangerous for you!”

“I’ll be dragged to that place anyways if I continue to act like a hero. I have no reason to turn down an extra reward when I know I’ll have to do this later.”

In Artpe’s past life, the Elves living inside the Forest of Eternity had suffered a a really horrible ending. Moreover, if he went by what was happening within the Diaz Kingdom, the current situation would probably be worse than what occurred in Artpe’s past life.

‘I have to do something before it is too late. Tsk. I’m already doing something annoying right now, yet I have a future appointment to do another annoying task. This is why I didn’t want to become a hero…….’

However, he would work diligently from now on. He would do it for the peaceful farm life he would greet in the future.

“Your counterpart isn’t here, so I’m not sure you should agree for her…”

“Ha. If you were going to say that then you should have something before you took out the contract. Maetel is leaving everything regarding the contract up to me.”

At that moment, Maetel was with Sienna. They were exploring a Dungeon they had found on this mountain. Maetel was teaching the ABC of battle to Sienna, and they were gathering any items that was worth money.

Normally, Dungeons were very hard to find, yet it wasn’t a problem for Artpe.

“So this finalizes the contract?”

“Yes? Yes…….”

She had been trembling inside, because she thought Artpe was going to ask for something very big. She nodded her head.

“Hoo-oo.”

“Ooh. Oooh. I hate this feeling.”

When the draft was completed, they put their signatures on it. The Soul Contract split into two, and two pages were absorbed into the body of Artpe and Mycenae.

It was an incredible magic contract. When there was a breach of contract, the penalty would be inflicted on one's soul. It was very expensive, but it allowed each party to completely trust each other.

This was why it was possible for Artpe to ask her questions that he had wanted to ask.

"Do you have a Skill Book that can be used by a Warrior Priestess?"

"That child was given the occupation of Warrior Priestess!?"

"So do you have it or not?"

"I don't have it right now. Do you realize how rare a Warrior Priestess Class is? Moreover, most of the Skill Books related to that Class is under the care of the temples..... Ooh-ah. You are giving me a very difficult homework from the beginning!"

"Please, I beg of you."

Artpe had on an impudent smile. It was an expression that would never be on a face of someone making a request. When he stood up, Mycenae grumbled at the fact that he left the matter as is..... She smacked her lips when she felt the energy that was being released from the bottom of the mountain.

"As expected, you weren't just doing a simple construction job."

Artpe had a twisted smile on his face. He didn't have to answer her. The smile was answer enough.

"I'll see you next time, ajumma. Please take care of Silpennon and Leseti."

"I'm almost done with that task. If you want to purchased the Warrior Priestess Skill Book, you'll have to call me a bit sooner next time!"

Mycenae took something out from her pocket. She threw it towards Artpe before she disappeared. Artpe confirmed the identity of the item as he snatched it out of the air.

".....it's a communication instrument."

It probably was a communication device that connected only with Mycenae, and it might double as a summoning device.

It seemed such services came along with making an exclusive contract. Artpe snorted as he put it away. Then he took a step forward as he weighed the enemy force that was busily climbing up the mountain.

“Magician-nim?”

“Yes, it is nothing. You should continue to build.”

The townspeople, who had been busy in their tasks, tilted their heads in puzzlement at Artpe’s movements. Artpe shook his head as he waved them away. If they got involved in this, it would get more complicated. From now on, the situation would be in Artpe’s domain.

‘So, I just have to exclude the region containing the Dungeon where Maetel and Sienna is traveling towards.....’

The Read All Creation ability worked fiercely as all the information about this region was injected into his brain. He knew where Maetel and Sienna was heading. He had the information regarding the size of the enemy force, and the terrain they were climbing. He even had the information regarding the structural integrity of the region supporting the small city they were building, and the mess that was left behind when Artpe gathered the ingredients for the construction.....

He finished his calculations.

“All right. Let’s do this.”

Artpe extended both his hands as he extended dozens of Mana Strings. All of them burrowed into the ground to cause a weak earthquake.

He had uprooted all the trees, so the soil was loosely held now. The tremor hit this region.

“What the hell? I feel a vibration.”

“Vibration? What the hell... Uh?”

“I... it’s the soil. There’s rocks mixed in with the dirt...”

“It’s a landslide! A landslide has just occurred!”

“Koo-ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhk!”

It was a enormous landslide that was almost impossible to replicate even with high rank magic. It engulfed the soldiers and the black magicians!

Chapter 43

Hero VS Kingdom (5)

Artpe hadn't chosen the site of the construction on a whim. There was a large open space on the mountainside. It was the ideal place to build a city. Many people would be able to live there. Moreover, this place was highly visible. If soldiers and black magicians were tracking them, it would be quite easy for them to find this place.

'This is my last chance to nip this in the bud before this blows up into something big. If their ability to judge a situation is not compromised, they would send their biggest force towards us in haste when they realize what I'm trying to do here. They'll try to completely bury this in the darkness.'

This was why Artpe had baited them. Instead of allowing them to increase the casualties of the innocents, Artpe decided to give them a target they can focus on. As if to confirm his thought process, the soldiers immediately gathered towards the mountain.

That wasn't all. There was a geographical advantage that inevitably came with being located midway up the mountain. Anyone that discovered and climbed towards the city would all be considered to be enemies.

Lastly, while he was destroying the mountain to construct the city, Artpe had executed the final touch to his plan. It was inevitable for him to upturn the earth when he uprooted the trees. In the process of doing so, how difficult would it be for him to prepare a trap within the terrain?

"Koo-ahhhhhhhhhhk!"

"T... the ground is eroding! The soil...!"

For example, Artpe had buried crystal balls that had been about to explode from being stuffed with Mana. He buried them deep in the ground, and he detonated them to cause massive casualties to his enemies.

"W... water!? My god! The valley! The water is coming from the valley!"

“Ggoo-ahhhhhhhhhhk!”

For example, he might have done some funny business while he constructed the waterways. His enemies would be swept away by the sewage.

“Boulders…… There are large boulders”

“Oh, no... Oh my god.”

“Koo-poo-aht!”

For example, he had stacked up a pile of boulders that he had excavated from the construction work. He sent them rolling as he caused the landslide.

“Koo-ahhhhhhhhk!”

“R... run away... Kah-ahk!”

Several thousand soldiers immediately died before they could enter into a battle. They hadn't even been able to locate their enemies before they were hit with a natural disaster. The road to mountain wasn't steep. However, a considerable number of soldiers and black magicians had already suffered horrible deaths.

“Devil.”

“There's a devil here!”

“A devil lives in this mountain! Run away!”

Who would actually want to climb up this mountain? The morale of the soldiers immediately bottomed out. The black magicians were too afraid of the unknown beings that resided on top of the mountain, so their feet were stuck to the ground.

“If they are able to use such tactics, what level are these magicians! How many of them are there!”

“Ooh ooh. This is terrifying. What spell was that? I... I can't win against that.”

Artpe's purple eyes let out a steady light as he moved his fingers through the air. The Mana Strings followed the movements of his fingers as additional landslides occurred.

The structure of all creation was seen through his eyes, so it was possible to know what would happen if certain parts were severed.

“Kooo-ahhhhhhhhhhk!”

“H... help me.....”

“Oh Demon King!”

The death throes of numerous people rang out. Death upon death was piling on as their blood became a lake, and their corpses became a hill. As if to add insult to injury, casualties continued to mount.

However, they had nowhere else to go. If they were able to act freely, they would have left at the outset.

“Huhk!”

“L... look at what’s happening down there. What’s going on.....”

“I... it’s an earthquake.”

Of course, the townspeople became aware of the fact that something was happening nearby. It was almost miraculous, but their current location was left alone. Still, the rest of the mountain was collapsing, so they couldn’t help but notice it.

“The soldiers below.....”

“The magician-nim is wiping them out.”

“He isn't making any large gestures. He is just waving his hands!”

He was using Mana Strings in conjunction with his Read All Creation ability. He looked like a god to the people around him. In truth, this was all possible, because he had made countless preparations beforehand. The people around him didn’t know this fact. Basically, his abilities were great for bluffing!

‘The difference between a Four Heavenly King and a hero is paper thin.’

Artpe was pleased as he waved his hands. An additional 100 soldiers died from one

wave, and another 80 died at his next gesture. Endless pain, screams and despair filled the bottom of mountain. However, Artpe didn't pay the slightest attention to them.

He already knew this would happen from the beginning. This was why he had sent Maetel to a different location. Maetel was now adept at discerning between good and evil. However, she couldn't put aside her tendency to shoulder every death onto her shoulders.

'However, I'm able to shrug it off.'

At the very least, the part of him that was the Four Heavenly King of the Demon King's army was better suited for this task than a hero. He was able to kill strangers to accomplish his goals. It was something one couldn't do unless one was able easily forget about such deeds.

He had lived under the unreasonable orders from the Demon King. He had lived through an unreasonable world. When the numbers of beings he had killed exceeded a million, it was possible for him to forget about their deaths. Therefore, there was no way Artpe would feel much when he was killing those that deserved death!

"Is it about done now?"

He had waved his hands for an hour. When Artpe confirmed that no troops were entering into the mountain, he retracted his hands. At this point, the mountain looked completely different from before.

"Well, if we can get up and down from this place, it should be fine."

"I wonder if we can be prosperous living on this mountain....."

This place that had been normal mountain A to the villagers. However, this mountain would now be long remembered in history. They had a faraway look as they looked at their residential environment, but they couldn't make their complaints known to Artpe.

Of course, Artpe knew what they were feeling inside.

"You should focus on the construction instead of paying attention to me. Do you really think it'll end with just one attack?"

“Heek!”

“A... a force of that size is going to come again?!?”

“It might be a larger force. It’ll be good for you guys if I can take care of them while I’m still here.”

A chill went up their spines when they heard his words. The people meekly went back to work. Artpe snorted as he exited the construction site.

‘So then, let’s.....’

He had purposefully spared one person. Amongst the black magicians, there had been one that possessed decent power, yet he had been very passive. He kept looking around at his surrounding in a cautious manner. Artpe buried everyone except him. He let this particular magician run away.

The bastard probably thought he was lucky. He probably thought that he had survived, because he had more sense than the others. To be precise, Artpe had enticed the black magician to act this way. Artpe had made the black magician think that he was clever in his escape.

However, the black magician never escaped Artpe’s sight from the beginning to the end.

‘Reinforcement.’

While Artpe was walking quickly, he used the Reinforcement skill on his boots.

It immediately allowed him to activate the Blink magic. The ability of the boots had been amplified, so he would be able to use Blink once or twice a day without consuming any of his Mana. It also considerably extended the range of the Blink magic.

If he could advance in his Reinforcement skill, he could probably use an additional Blink. However, his current capabilities was enough.

“Hmmp!”

Artpe used consecutive Blinks as he kicked off the ground. In a flash, he was already running across the base of the mountain. In his previous life, it would have been

impossible for him to move like this.

He never imagined there would come a day when he would be able to physically exert himself like this. The title of a Hero wasn't an empty one. As he had leveled up in the past year, he hadn't just grown in terms of magical energy. His physical stats had also made rapid progress.

Of course, his physical abilities were laughable when compared to a level 160 Warrior, but he was on a different level when compared to a mage of similar level. Artpe looked exactly like a typical magician on the outside. This was why they wouldn't know about Artpe's physical capabilities. This gave him an advantage against his opponents.

"Another Blink and... Good. I caught you."

"Kuhk!?"

He had quickly descended the mountain, and he was finally successful in grabbing the black magician by the back of his neck. As expected of a cautious and meticulous person, the black magician was equipped with an Artifact that attacked an ambusher. However, it was effective only if the enemy was unaware of the trap.

Of course, Artpe knew the activation condition of the Artifact. He also knew its shape, structure and power. When he grabbed the black magician, he immediately destroyed it with his Mana String. The Artifact didn't activate.

"Huhk!"

The black magician was shocked when he realized this fact. He had already realized that his opponent was on a different level than him. It was enough for him.

"P... please spare me! I'll tell you everything!"

"All right. I was hoping you would say that."

"Kuhk!"

Artpe moved as if he was about to charge forward, but he used the motion to plant his opponent's head into the ground. If he found out Artpe was a child, he might show some bravado. He had to pressure his opponent from the perch of absolute power. It would allow him to easily extract information out of the man.

Artpe put his foot on the man's back as he asked the question.

"So, which Demon is cooperating with the Archduke?"

There was a limit on how abrupt a topic should be broached. Artpe had already concluded that the Archduke was behind all of this, and he was cooperating with a Demon. He skipped over those parts to ask the next question!

It seemed the black magician was taken aback by Artpe's question, so he carefully opened his mouth.

"Demon? I don't know... Heek."

Artpe extended his Mana String, and he leisurely placed it around his opponent's finger. It felt as if the Mana String was sharp enough to sever his finger at any moment. The man gulped.

Artpe spoke in a low voice.

"Your life is worth nothing to me, but I'm guessing that isn't true for you?"

"C... correct."

"That means your words must change next time you speak. Understood?"

"Y... yes, sir."

Threat and torture were essential skills for a Four Heavenly King in finding out a secret! Usually, heroes were unable to extract information. They were either too soft-hearted or inexperienced. It usually came back to bite them in the back, but that would never happen to Artpe!

"I... it was a woman called Tienna. She conscripted some of the kingdom's magicians. She said she would help the Archduke if he cooperated with her experiment..... I... I was one of the magician that was conscripted."

He was telling the truth. He hadn't originally been a black magician. He had went through a Class change to become one. Of course, he had come here following the orders of the Archduke, so his origin was unimportant.

However, he had said her name was Tienna. If she had exited the Demon world to work within the human world, she would have to be talented. Artpe had never heard of her name in his past life. It probably was an alias.....

Artpe let out a sigh as he asked the question.

“I thought the Archduke was searching everywhere for the heroes. So how did he come up with an idiotic idea of cooperating with a Demon?”

“W... we were told that the Demon King won’t kill the heroes until the heroes attack the Demon King’s castle.....”

Kyhhh.

Artpe never expected them to leak such important information at such an early stage!

It would be a lie to say he wasn’t feeling a bit nervous at facing a plan that was much more sophisticated than what the Demon King’s army carried out in his previous life.

It seemed the Demon King’s disposition as a chef hadn’t gone away!

‘Still, the Archduke believed the information, and he gave consent to let the Demon into his country. Then there is the Demon King that refuse to catch the heroes when a really good opportunity presents itself. He continues to follow his recipe.....’

He wondered if it would be cleaner to just let the world end. Originally, Artpe had no desire to protect the world. He had done his best to work towards his peaceful retirement, yet problems were coming at him from unexpected places. It sapped his energy away.

“I... I’m telling the truth! It sounds unbelievable, but that’s the story I was told! I completely understand your reaction. I didn’t believe it the first time I heard it, but...”

“All right. I believe you.”

“Then you are going to spare me!”

“Before I do so, let me ask you the last question. What’s the size of the army waiting on standby? Speak.”

The shortcut to victory was to take the enemies unawares before they could conduct an attack. A smile of triumph appeared on Artpe's lips. It was best to upturn the table before the game could be set!

The black magician gave an answer

"There is none....."

".....huh?"

At Artpe's questioning voice, the man gave additional information with a defeated voiced.

"That was all of us..... It is impossible for the kingdom to spare any more soldiers. You've killed over 10,000 soldiers and over 20 black magicians. How can there be more? The Diaz Kingdom is ruined now. When the Archduke finds out about this, I'm sure he will cry....."

"....."

Artpe became silent as he heard the black magician's words. His ardent lamentation reeked of helplessness.

It was the moment when a hero ruined a country.

Chapter 44

Two Hero's Party (1)

“Well, you can get up now.”

“Yes…… A child!? Kahk!”

“You aren’t going to amount to anything much.”

After he extracted the time-sensitive information, Artpe spared the black magician as promised. The black magician's two arms were tied together, and a warm marble was placed near his chest. It would immediately explode if the black magician tried to use magic. Then Artpe took his gold and artifacts. No matter how he did it, he had spared the black magician’s life.

“You are so young, yet how can you be so brutal…….”

“I’m sure you know about the experiments that was carried out by the Demon with the help of the Archduke. Can you say that again? Who’s brutal?”

Did the black magician relax a little bit when he found out Artpe was young? He had the guts to bad mouth Artpe, but when he heard Artpe’s voice, he immediately shut his mouth. He knew his life could be easily taken away if he spoke carelessly.

On the other hand, the battle had ended so suddenly that Artpe had a hard time accepting the truth. He was barely able to realize that everything wasn’t settled yet.

“Do you have other locations where you conduct experiments?”

“W... we don’t. There are still black magicians left in the kingdom, but there are only one or two left...”

Nothing could be done with just two black magicians. If they were capable of doing something, they were out of Artpe’s league as of now, so he just had to ignore them.

Did he really solve everything at once?

Artpe was having a hard time believing in his own accomplishment, so he lowered his voice further to give additional threats. However, the only thing he accomplished by doing so was to bring about the black magician's teary eyed confession. It brought back childhood nightmares for the man.

At this point, he knew it was true. Diaz really had no answer!

"Maybe, if all the forces of Diaz could be gathered to attack this place, it might be possible. However, the whole country isn't on the side of the Archduke. It isn't as if he could unilaterally gather all the magicians within the kingdom. There is also the issue of him receiving help from a Demon to take control of the throne... The only ones that could be sent to this place were troops that were completely under the command of the Archduke. Since all of us are dead....."

Artpe didn't need to hear any more to know what would happen. In short order, the ownership of the Diaz Kingdom would definitely change again. Or maybe the kingdom itself would disappear.

Artpe had a far away look as he looked past the mountain. His gaze came to rest on the mountain of corpses and blood that was flowing like an ocean. It was a nice and peaceful view that went well with what Artpe was feeling.

"All right. What about the demon?"

"The demon trained us, and she left after giving giving us orders. I... I'm telling you the truth. If her presence became known to the opposing factions, the Archduke's position would have been untenable... This is the condition the Archduke had to work with."

Was that really true? What if the Archduke stationed his troops nearby in case something went wrong? Wouldn't he use the Demon to turn the kingdom on its head when something went wrong?

Artpe had a habit of always imagining the worst case possible. Then he thought about what he would do in such a situation. He went through that process, and he realized there was nothing that could be accomplished by him going to the palace. This fact calmed his heart.

"Yes, if they are at a dead end, maybe it might be better for the Diaz Kingdom to fall."

"T... then I can....."

The black magician slightly narrowed his eyes to look at Artpe's expression. Artpe had let go of everything, and his heart was feeling lighter. It seemed the black magician was trying to use that moment to his advantage. He was trying to secure his own safety. Artpe put on a bright smile as he spoke to the black magician.

"Of course. I gave you my promise, so I'll spare you. However, you do realize I'm not going to spare you for nothing?"

"S... sure. I'll do whatever you want. I'll give up on black magic to live a peaceful life! Maybe, I'll go to the countryside to tend some cows?"

"Are you looking down on the dairy industry?"

"Heek!?"

Artpe put him in his place before he used the Read All Creation to read the black magician's information.

[Deyus von Signema]

[Black Magician]

[Level : 70]

[Strength : 8 Agility : 9 Stamina : 16 Magic Energy : 169]

Artpe's magical energy was over 800. Even if one took into account the almost 100 level difference, the gap was ridiculously large. Moreover, while Artpe possessed magical energy over 800, he also had a considerable amount of strength, agility and stamina. Artpe was several dimensions apart from the black magician, and the difference was unsurmountable.

However, despite this fact, Deyus' talent wasn't too bad. It seemed he had been diligent in his magic studies every time he had leveled up. Basically, he had done tasks that would raise his magical energy. Normally, the simple and honest ones that work really hard didn't get lured by black magic.....

Artpe was tilting his head in puzzlement when he caught the florid last name.

He realized the truth through intuition.

“Your parents are nobles from the Archduke’s faction?”

“How did you know that!? My father is the right hand man of the Archduke, so I had no choice..... Huhk!”

Deyus von Signema was so surprised by Artpe’s pointed question that he unintentionally blurted out the information. He flinched when Artpe’s smile turned vicious.

“Ah, it doesn't matter. You can’t gain much from using me against my family. I’m ready to sever my relationship from the family. I’m willing to go live a quiet life in the remote countryside.....”

“No, I was just thinking you have the setting to become a legendary hero.”

“L... legendary? Setting?”

“Yes. I will spare you, and I’m starting to have an idea on how you can be of benefit to me.”

Deyus von Sigmema had a bad feeling when he heard Artpe’s words. The next word out of Artpe’s mouth pretty much confirmed Deyus’ thoughts.

“Have you heard of a Soul Contract?”

“Are you ok, Artpe!?”

“Oppa!”

When Artpe returned to the site of the construction, Maetel and Sienna were already back after finishing their Dungeon exploration. They had already surveyed what had occurred below the mountain, so they had a good idea on what Artpe had done.

“I’m not hurt at all, so you guys don’t have to grope me like that.”

“But there are so many corpses here?”

“It was like cutting a bread with a knife. There is no way I would cut my finger doing such a task, so you guys should relax.”

Maetel's talent made her a genius, but she couldn't kill ten thousand troops. This was true even if she used her Acceleration skill, which was a total cheat ability. What he had done was possible, because he was a magician.

"Still, I'm glad Artpe is unharmed."

"Oppa~."

When the two girls were sure Artpe was unharmed, they clung to his side. Deyus was staring at this curious sight, but he quickly lowered his gaze to the ground.

Thankfully, Deyus was quick on the uptake. As Artpe had that thought, he spoke quietly towards Maetel and Sienna.

"I think we should leave tomorrow, so you guys should make preparations."

"Tomorrow!? Isn't that too fast?"

"Didn't you originally say it would take over a week, oppa?"

That's right. He had originally allocated around a week for all of this. He had assumed there would be at least two more attacks by troops under the command of the Archduke.

"My secondary power was stronger than I thought....."

It seemed the Archduke of Diaz was dumber than he had assumed.

"I'm not sure what you are talking about, but does this mean the people here are safe now?"

"For now, they are."

Of course, even if the townspeople gladly left behind their former residences to come to this place, it didn't mean there won't be any calamities or threats in the future. Even if the Archduke was ruined, it wasn't as if his power base would all disappear. Moreover, the Demon King's army was alive and well. This was why this location was the ideal location to place this city.

'We will stay here tonight. However, we'll have to move on when the day brightens.

We'll have to move as if we are really busy..... '

Artpe let out a light sigh as he spoke to his party.

"You two did well in going to the Dungeon. It'll be busy once again tomorrow. Both of you should wash and rest. Sienna, you have to do a good job saying farewell to your sister."

"Yes!"

Sienna hugged Artpe tighter before she disengaged. She turned around as she ran off. Level 28 could be seen clearly above her head. Laughter slipped out of him at the absurdity of it.

"How come there are only monsters around me?"

"But Artpe is the most incredible one amongst us."

Maetel spoke as she glared at the retreating back of Sienna. Artpe gave a non-committal answer as he mussed her hair a bit roughly.

"You should go rest."

"But Artpe is going to work again."

"Since I've made this mess, I can't just leave everything as is."

Maetel had a sullen expression on her face, but she knew there was nothing she could do. She nodded head.

Maetel glanced at the black magician Deyus, and she asked Artpe a question.

"This person is a bad guy. Is it ok for you to be with him like this?"

"I gave him my word that I would spare him, so I have no choice. Instead, I'm thinking about using him in the future."

"Ooh, ooh-ooh."

It didn't matter what Artpe was saying at that moment. Deyus' mind was filled with

the word Soul Contract. He couldn't hear anything else. What scary things will he have to do with his soul on mortgage!

Maetel really didn't like Deyus, who was letting out a foul energy. However, she saw that he was shaking in fear, so it seemed he couldn't do anything against Artpe.

As expected, Deyus didn't have any allies here. He was destined to shake in fear until he was given an order.

The night passed quickly. Artpe stood at the center of the construction site, and he did all the tasks that could be done with his Mana Strings.

He had made a mess of the mountain, so he tidied it up. He gathered materials that would be used for construction, then he searched the mountain for animals that could be used for food.....

As he used it more, Artpe realized that Mana String was an incredible magic. This was especially true when he used it with his Read All Creation ability. The Mana Strings could gather and analyze all the information in its surrounding. It used the information to move in the most efficient manner. It sometimes felt as if he was moving in all directions at the same time.

Even the one using the magic was surprised, so how would those watching him feel? Other people couldn't see the Mana Strings. It was as if Artpe was changing everything just by waving his hands. He looked like a god.

"I really don't think he is human."

"Do you doubt it after seeing all of this? He is a god. A god!"

Thanks to Artpe's exertion, the city had a foundation by the time morning came. The people felt the truth in their bones. They realized how much construction could be done by working with a magician, who possessed a basic knowledge of architecture.

"It is possible to create waterways like this? How surprising."

"This place is already better than our town!"

"I love our view. It is quite open."

“This should be good enough.”

Artpe even checked the wooden barricade around the small city. He made sure everything was perfect before he withdrew his magic. He had used Mana Strings every time his Mana had recovered. Usually, it took a long time for Unique Spells to develop, but it had already reached level 10.

“.....shall we go now?”

He cleared everything. It was impossible to clear a Quest as thoroughly as this. He had finished the base Quest alongside the hidden Quests. He hadn't intended to do this, but he kept completing the Quests that had popped up in a row. It was ironic, but he was done now.

“Magician-nim, are you perhaps leaving already?”

“Magician-nim.....”

It was almost supernatural as to how the townspeople were able to sense his impending departure. They were flustered as they hung onto him. However, Artpe was firm in his attitude.

“I did all I could do here. No one will be able to threaten you if you stay within this city. There's no one left to put a curse on you, so you can be at ease and resume your lives. Ah. I want you to forget about my party, and don't ever speak about us. You should always bear that in mind.”

Artpe had rescued the kids, and he had gathered the townspeople to construct a city on the mountain. They owed him a lot, yet he wanted them to forget about him. They were surprised by his demand.

“Magician-nim.....”

“I'm going.”

It seemed the townspeople wanted Artpe to live in the city. They wanted him to rule over them, but Artpe didn't hold any lingering attachment to this mountain.

He had been forced to carry out this Quest, and he hadn't received any rewards. He hated those types of Quests the most! Artpe wanted to run out of here as soon as

possible. He dragged Maetel and Sienna with him. The people came out in droves, yet he ignored them all.

“Sienna, you have to be happy!”

“I’ll be back, unni!”

The most memorable sight was Aena and Sienna. Aena was crying, yet Sienna had a big smile on her face.

It seemed she didn’t want her unni to worry about her or maybe she really wasn’t sad..... He wanted to think it was the former, but Sienna’s face was way too bright for it to be true.

“Aena unni will be safe if she lives in this town. It is enjoyable for me to be with oppa. This is what is best for the both of us!”

“It isn’t enjoyable for me if Sienna is with us.”

“Maetel unni, you joke around too much.”

The two brats armed themselves with congenial smiles as they sparred with each other. Artpe decided not to intrude. In fact, he didn’t even like acknowledging it. Deyus was being dragged by the rope, and it felt as if he was staring at Artpe. He also decided to ignore him.

“Magician-nim!”

“Magiciaaaaaaaaaaaaaan-nim!”

He had completely turned away from the city, and the gazes of the townspeople was squarely on his back. It stung. What did he actually do that merited them calling after him with such fervor? He was afraid his resolve would weaken if he turned around to look at them.

‘Humans are simple beings. I did all of this knowing this would would happen. What emotion am I supposed to feel when the people react in a the manner I predicted?’

It was a thought that was unbecoming of him. Artpe tsked as he shook his head to free himself from those thoughts. He took out the communication device, and he soon had

a connection to Mycenae.

“Ajumma.”

[Hello, customer. My name is Mycenae. Mycenae.]

“Did you finish their education?”

[.....it just finished right now]

“All right. I’m going to visit them once, so you should wait for me with them.”

[Did you really contact me for that...]

Artpe ruthlessly severed the connection, then he turned to look at his party.

“Silpennon’s party will be in charge of this black magician. Of course, I will put a fail safe in place..... After we tell them what to do, we can go on a merry trip to find a magician. Does anyone have a question?”

“Yes, I have one!”

Maetel raised her hand high into the air as she spoke.

“The level difference between Sienna and us is large. Since we are leaving behind the black magician in their care, what if leave behind Sienna too?”

It was a weirdly compelling suggestion, but Artpe let out a bitter laugh. It was possible for Maetel to become smart when she was trying to eliminate her competitor! On the other hand, Sienna was flustered as she gripped Artpe’s sleeve.

“I like oppa. I can raise my level quickly, so don’t throw me away. Ok?”

Of course, Artpe didn’t plan on leaving behind Sienna. Unlike Silpennon, she was a cute and honest girl. It was a plus, but there was a fundamental reason why she was different from him.

“Silpennon is different from Sienna, Maetel. If I want to explain this difference, I’ll have to give you a long lecture on what Classes are..... I’ll give you a short explanation for now. Maetel, do you know about those that are called nobles when they aren’t nobles?”

Maetel shook her head from side to side without much strength. Artpe nodded his head in a solemn manner as he gently put one hand on Sienna's head. Then he spoke to Maetel.

"We have one right here. You should greet her. She is the noble healer of our party."

Chapter 45

Two Hero's Party (2)

Priests were always stiff-necked. They were all stuck-up. However, there were good reasons why they were able to act that way. The first reason being priests were as rare as magicians. The second reason being they were considered to be talents indispensable in all situations.

“It isn’t as if there aren’t any magic spells that could heal wounds. However, the effectiveness of a magician’s Heal is crap. It sucks. Even if the magician had enough Mana to use Heal, one would be better off using scouting, defensive or offensive magic. On top of that, the probability of getting wounded increases as the Dungeons become more dangerous. It is impossible to last just using potions. This is why all parties want and seek the help of a priest.”

Of course, it was a bit of a different story in regards to heroes. They could learn skills from all Classes. It wasn't just the magician’s Healing spell. They could even learn the priest’s Cure spell.

However, Artpe already consumed an extreme amount of Mana using the Mana Strings. He didn’t have the luxury to learn and use the Cure spell. Maetel was an idiot, so she couldn’t learn the spell.

However, a priestess with no attachment to any temple had shown up in front of him. He had Sienna, who was naturally gifted with high magical energy.

Even if she was a Warrior Priestess, she wasn’t completely dependent on her holy power. Her magical energy was structured in a way where she could stand on her own. Still, she was a priestess, so she would be able to learn the Cure spell!

“Oppa, my level is low. Will I be helpful to you?”

Sienna felt considerably relieved at Artpe’s words. She looked up at him as she asked him the question. Maetel was explicit in expressing her disappointment. However, Artpe lightly ignored Maetel as he stroked Sienna’s head.

“Of course, you will be of great help.”

“What a relief.”

Of course, this was under the assumption that she learned the Cure Spell that a Warrior Priestess could learn. He had no choice but to put his trust in Mycenae to make that part come true.

“It hasn’t arrived yet.”

“?? I took a chance in signing an exclusive contract with you, yet ajumma is being very unhelpful.”

“You really are a rude customer! Moreover, you called me ajumma again!”

Mycenae grinded her teeth, but it was true that she hadn’t been able to acquire Artpe’s order. She didn’t know why she was giving excuses. She let out a sigh as she gave Artpe the other item he had ordered. She pushed the Soul Contract towards him.

“Will this be all, customer? I’m going to go rest. This side venture has made me very tired.”

“You suffered a lot helping us. Take it easy. We’ll see you again next time. ”

“Thank you, Elven merchant-nim.”

Silpennon and Leseti gave a courteous farewell. It seemed Mycenae wasn’t totally devoid of feelings. She put on a soft expression as she raised her hand towards them.

“For this business trip, I’ll consolidate the education fee, and the items expenditure cost. I’m givubg you a 30% discount, so it will be 1,287 gold.”

“Kyahh. I guess we can’t move past that.”

“How can I move past that? Just be a good boy and give me my money.”

Silpennon helplessly paid out her business expenses. After Mycenae was sure she received her dues, she started to move away with her cart behind her. She gazed at Artpe.

“I’ll contact you as soon as I acquire the Skill Books. When that happens, please come to the closest branch of the Anywhere company.”

“If possible, please hurry it up.”

Sienna was undoubtedly a Warrior ‘Priestess’, yet there was no one here that could give her the education she needed as a priestess. This was why she was simply learning Mana Control and fighting techniques.

It wasn’t just Mana. She was pretty talented at controlling her body, so she was making progress on both fronts. However, as her combat skill level and Mana Control level kept climbing, he couldn’t shake the feeling that something was amiss.

“Ah. I want you to gather Skill Books and Spell Books for all the other Classes. I want you to acquire everything you can get your hands on. Do you get what I’m trying to say?”

“Of course. You can leave it to me. Also, you should prepare the money you will have to give me.”

“Hoo.”

Artpe smirked when she mentioned money. She suddenly had the desire to ask him more about it, but she came to the conclusion that he wouldn’t give her an answer. She clicked her tongue as she disappeared.

“Let’s go after we finish our business here.”

“So why did you come back here again? Huh. By the way...”

When Mycenae exited, there were only six people left inside the Slime Dungeon. Sienna stuck close to Artpe’s back as she warily looked at the other people. Silpennon’s eyes turned round when he caught sight of Sienna.

“You gained another woman, Artpe. You are young, yet you are already like this. It is terrifying to imagine what you will be like in the future.”

“When you start paying attention to the gender of one’s party member, that is when you have a problem on your hand.”

“Party member? You put her in when you didn’t put us in?”

Silpennon looked aggrieved. As if Artpe understood Silpennon’s feeling, he nodded his head.

“I know you are disappointed that my party gained a member. I know all about it. That is why I am here to supplement your party. I brought a talent here. You should say hi to Deyus.”

“No, what we want is to join your party..... What did you just say?”

Instead of Sienna, Artpe pushed Deyus towards Silpennon’s side. For some unknown reason, Deyus had his head covered with a hood. However, he couldn’t resist against Artpe’s strength, so his face was revealed.

At that moment, Leseti instinctively unsheathed her sword.

“You dare show yourself, insect.”

“Deyus.....”

“C... crown prince.”

His face turned ashen as he faced Silpennon. Silpennon’s face was cold as his expression hardened.

It seemed they were acquaintances. Moreover, it seemed they weren’t on good terms.

“Artpe. I’m sure you brought him here as a party member for us, because you don’t know this man’s identity. I cannot accept this man. His family once swore an oath of loyalty to the king, yet they betrayed us by taking the side of the Archduke. They killed numerous knights that tried to protect me.....”

“Silpennon, I already know who he is.”

“What!?”

Silpennon became incensed, but the smile on Artpe’s lips remained. He put a hand on Deyus’ shoulder as he spoke.

“You should explain it. Tell them what you did, and how you came to be with me.”

“W... will you stop them from killing me?”

“Of course. I have a use for you.”

“.....ughh.”

Deyus closed his eyes tight when he saw the Soul Contract in Artpe’s hand. While he was being bombarded by murderous intent from Silpennon and Leseti, he let out a sigh before he opened his mouth.

“Your highness. In truth, I.....”

The explanation was brief. He hadn’t been on the scene of the revolt, and he hadn’t become a black magician by choice. However, he had been part of the troops dispatched to destroy the evidence of their crime. It was most definitely a sin that was worthy of death. It was good that he was able to admit that fact, but.....

“How effective is a Soul Contract? How great must it be for you to spare him?”

“If he breaks it, his soul is up for forfeit.”

“Amazing.”

Deyus wasn’t going to be a regular party member. This truth was quite clear to him. Silpennon stared at Artpe as he asked a question.

“If it is alright with you, could you include a clause of my choosing in the contract for me?”

“Of course. However, you can’t kill him.”

“Of course, If I kill him, I can no longer torment him...”

“Heek.”

Deyus’ face turned paler, but there was no one here that would help him. In the end, he had to sign the Soul Contract, which was filled with unreasonable provisions. At that moment, the crown prince’s party gained a low rank slave.

“There is a limited amount of spells that can be used by a black magician. Still, unless you can find the help of a priest, he might become your best party member. His talent isn’t too bad, and he will be good at following directions.”

“I... I’ll do anything.....”

The content of the contract was bleak. Deyus had a look that could only be seen on those that had lost their country. The only comfort he could derive from this was the fact that he hadn’t been killed like his fellow black magicians.

“I know it is hard for you to emotionally accept him, but you and Leseti will be safer if you use him. This is why you shouldn’t kill him. You should take him along with you guys.”

“I understand. I’m surprised that you thought so much about us.”

Artpe had retraced his steps to bring Deyus here. It seemed he had been worried about them. Silpennon was moved by the gesture, but in a flash, a twinkle shone in Artpe’s eyes.

“In truth, that wasn’t the only reason I am here.”

“I should have known.”

Silpennon immediately became disappointed. However, he would soon be singing a different tune when he heard Artpe’s next words. He spoke about the main reason for coming here. He spoke about why he added Deyus to their party.

“I came here to give you an offer that you cannot refuse.”

“I’ve heard that from somewhere before.....”

Silpennon narrowed his eyes. Artpe had spoken similar words when he rejected Silpennon’s offer! He waited to see how great this offer was.

Artpe took out a map.

“Mmm..... A map?”

“It looks to be of high quality... It’s the map that was commissioned by the throne!”

It was a map of the Diaz Kingdom. Artpe had acquired it when he killed the knights that were trying to assassinate Silpennon. The odd part about this map was the fact that there were circles drawn in various locations. Moreover, there were numbers written starting from 1 in random order.

“What is this……? What are these circles? No, what do these numbers mean?”

Silpennon cross examined him. Artpe let out a light laugh as he gave an explanation.

“These are all Dungeons.”

“What!?”

“What did you say!?”

“Pardon me!?”

Silpennon, Leseti and even Deyus was surprised. There were 20 or more circles drawn on the map. They couldn’t believe these were all Dungeons!

However, Artpe’s expression didn’t falter at all as he spoke those words.

“I’m sure the Dungeons are here, so you can trust me on that. Of course, several of them have already been discovered. However, if you guys want to smoothly raise your levels, you should visit all of them.”

When he heard those words, a thought suddenly lit up inside Silpennon’s head. It was as if he was having a hard time believing his own thoughts. He carefully asked Artpe the question.

“Wait a moment, Artpe. The numbers start from one, because…”

“Yes. If you go in order, you won’t have too much difficulty clearing the Dungeons. You will be able to grow as you clear them. This is especially true for you, Silpennon. You have to visit all of them to grow your Seeking skill and your Trap Dismantling skill.”

“You…….”

Astonishment was followed behind by shock. Silpennon’s party decided not to think further on the subject. Artpe knew about Dungeons that were not discovered yet, and

he also knew what level of monsters would appear within them!

“Within Deyus joining your party, you are only missing a priest. Aside from that fact, you have the perfect party. Since there are undiscovered Dungeons pointed out here, the reward will be quite lucrative. You can use the leftover money to purchase Mana potions and Stamina potions. Also, if you suffer defeat in a Dungeon, you can use the communication device to contact me.”

“You…….”

He knew Artpe’s ability was boundless, but his knowledge was beyond bountiful! Was it really possible for a human to know all this?

“How can this be…….”

“Hmm. It is possible because it’s Artpe.”

“Yes, it is because he is oppa.”

Leseti’s mouth hung open in amazement, and she just accepted the situation as is. However, Silpennon wasn’t dumb enough to believe that. Deyus, who was listening from the side, wasn’t dumb either. Maetel and Sienna wasn’t just talking about the veracity of knowledge. They believed nothing was impossible for Artpe to achieve in this world, so they naturally accepted his words.

“Hoo... All right. Whatever.”

For a brief moment, Silpennon had puzzled over it. However, in the end, he decided not to challenge the veracity of Artpe’s claim. Artpe would gain nothing from lying to them. If he started doubting Artpe’s ability, he felt as if he would be going down a rabbit hole. It would be better for his sanity to just believe everything Artpe had said.

However...

“Since you’ve told us the reward, I’m guessing you will now offer your terms? Right, Artpe?”

“I like the fact that you are smart.”

Artpe grinned as he made his declaration.

“I want you guys to give me half of the Dungeon rewards.”

Chapter 46

Two Hero's Party (3)

“Half? Are you sure that is enough?”

Artpe's stipulation made Silpennon feel dazed. Artpe was telling them everything about the Dungeons, and he even told them about the levels of the monsters they would face. Despite this fact, he only wanted half of the reward. It didn't matter what others said, but according to Silpennon's standards, it was a very generous offer. It was so generous that it was as if Artpe had given the information away for free. However, Artpe nodded his head as if it was reasonable.

“You have to think about you, Leseti and Deyus. The most crucial part is acquiring Deyus' skills, Spell Books, equipments and potions. If you think about the combined cost, I'm pretty sure not much will be left from your half of the reward. You should think of it as improving your chances of survival. Instead of saving your money, you are strengthening yourselves. That is why you'll have barely enough to pay for my half-share.”

“Artpe.....”

Silpennon and Leseti was floundering around in a soup of emotions. Deyus was confused. He wonder if this might be good for him in the long run.

They didn't realize that he planned on using them in his future confrontation with the Demon King. It would allow him to avoid hardship in the future. It had been a while, since he had thought like a Four Heavenly King. Artpe continued to speak.

“Also, I'll give you a list right now. You will never sell these items from the Dungeons to the merchants. You have to keep it, and you have to give it to me at a later date. There is the Crown of Wisdom, Scroll of Destruction, Eye of Prophecy, Spring of Tears, Spear of Twilight.....”

Silpennon busily wrote down the names of the Artifacts given by Artpe. He tilted his head in puzzlement. He could tell that they were were terrifyingly high ranked Artifacts just by their names. He wondered if they would really come out from the

Dungeons.

“Then there is the Blood Fragment... All right. That’s it.”

Artpe spoke the name of dozens of Artifacts without hesitation. Silpennon, who had written it down, had a very sour expression on his face.

“I’ve never heard of these items, yet I can tell they are incredibly valuable. Are you sure these items will come out from such low level Dungeons?”

“This is why I want you to diligently train your Seek skill. Then you’ll be able to find them. No, these items will come out from the Dungeons. You better not leave the Diaz kingdom until you find them all.”

Arte’s expression was always composed. Of course, these Artifacts had all come out from the Dungeons in his previous life. These artifacts were worth so much that it was ill-matched to be within the low level Dungeons.

In the first place, Artpe had given them the locations of these Dungeons, because he wanted to acquire all those Artifacts. However, Artpe and Maetel’s levels were too high to go there themselves. Moreover, it was an annoying task since the Dungeons were located far apart from each other.

It was convenient to have others that would do the task for you!

“I want you put your trust in me, and do what I say.”

“I don’t particularly like your laid back attitude, but... All right, I’ve digested everything you’ve said. You are saying we should work in parallel with each other.”

“Artpe…… If you weren’t here, I... Kyahhk!”

Letseti looked deeply moved as she grabbed Artpe’s hands tightly. She was thrown aside by Maetel and Sienna. Silpennon wasn’t amused with his former guardian knight’s antic, so he glared at her. Then he carefully put away the valuable map.

“This has been a learning experience, Artpe. So this is how you suggest a proposal that can’t be refused. I accept your proposal.”

“All right. Let us go on our separate paths.”

Artpe, Maetel and Sienna.

Silpennon, Leseti and Deyus.

No matter how one saw it, they were divided into the hero team and the support team.

They firmly shook hands.

It would take them two years to meet again.

"I'll be back after I become strong. Will you accept me into your party at that time?"

"All right. I'll think about when we reach that point."

"No, I don't like it. I don't like Silpennon."

"Why, Maetel!"

"I don't like you!"

It would be hard for them to meet up again, but Silpennon believed that they would be able to become friends someday.

The two party dispersed.

"Artpe, I'm curious about one thing."

After leaving the Dungeon, they were walking quickly down the mountainous path. While they were walking, Maetel asked Artpe a question.

"About what?"

"It's about the magician we are going to meet."

He had explained at ad nauseam about the magician's abilities, and the reason why they had to bring her into the party. Did she still feel repulsed by the prospect of growing the party? Artpe tilted his head in puzzlement as he turned to look at Maetel.

"What about the magician?"

Maetel's eyes narrowed as she asked the question.

"Is the magician a female?"

"Uh, yeah. The magician is female?"

He never expected her to ask about the gender of the magician. It was a question that had nothing to do with one's ability! Artpe was dumbfounded as he replied to the question. When she heard the answer, Maetel's expression turned more sullen.

"Artpe, did you send the black magician towards Silpennon, because he was male?"

".....eh-whew."

As expected, she was under a massive delusion. Artpe let out a sigh as he flicked Maetel's forehead.

"Gender isn't important. Silpennon's party didn't have a magician, and I had a magician under my thumb. The pieces fit together. That is why I sent him along with Silpennon. I didn't exclude him from our party, because he is male."

"Eeesh..... What if he had been a young and pretty girl?"

"I don't know what answer you want from me. I would have let the person join Silpennon's party irrespective of age and gender. Are you done now?"

"Oooh-mmmmm."

It seemed Maetel wasn't satisfied with Artpe's answer. She let out discontented sound as she stuck close to him. It seemed she was trying to use skinship to express the feeling she wasn't able to articulate. When she did that, Sienna stuck to him on the other side as if they were in competition.

Yes, he was now used to it. He hadn't wanted to get used to it, yet he had.

What should he call the bitter feeling he was feeling right now?

Artpe was absorbed in self-contemplation as he let out a sigh.

This time Sienna asked a question.

“Oppa, where can we find this magician-nim?”

“Ah…… The place is called Aedia. It is a country that is more advanced in magic research compared to the Diaz kingdom.”

“She’s in a different country!?”

Maetel suddenly expressed her shock. Artpe smirked when he saw this.

This small hero possessed incredible abilities, yet her knowledge, experience and intelligence was lacking compared to her capabilities. Still, he couldn’t have her set her sight only on countryside villages. He also couldn’t keep her tied down in the dark Dungeons.

It was time for her to broaden her horizon. He would be able accomplish that task by the time they meet the magician.

“We have to cross an ocean, so it’ll be a pretty long journey. Of course, I’ve already planned out the route……”

Artpe took out another map. He had found more than one map of this kingdom on the knights he had killed.

“Well, look here. Do you see the city at the end of the map? This is a key location that links the Diaz kingdom to the other kingdoms. It is a harbor city named Frate. We’ll travel across the ocean to reach Aedia.”

The distance to Frate was around 300 times the distance they had traveled after Artpe and Maetel ran away from their town at the age of 12.

To be fair, the incidents with the Hero’s Dungeon and the Curse of the Demon had prevented them from traveling far. Still, Maetel had lived her whole life in the countryside. She would now be traveling an unfathomable amount of distance.

“Wahh-ahhh. It’s far away. It might take us 3 months to walk there.”

“Of course, we aren’t just going to go straight towards the city. We’ll learn what we have to learn, and we’ll kill the monsters we have to kill. We’ll also buy what we need to buy. There is also the problem of the ocean being uncrossable during the fall and winter. This is why I intentionally plan to go there through a roundabout way.”

The ocean was uncrossable during fall and winter only for normal people, but the two girls didn't argue the point. Their attention was solely on the fact that they were going to hunt monsters. Their eyes shone fiercely.

They looked as if they were ready to slaughter the monsters at that very moment. It wasn't an expression that should be seen on a 12 and 13 year old girls..... However, when one thought about the path they would have to traverse in the future, they had the right attitude.

"We'll be on the road heading towards Frate. I intentionally didn't tell Silpennon about the Dungeons we are going to visit. We have to gather funds for our trip, and he has to increase Sienna's level."

"You told them about so many Dungeons, yet there are still more Dungeons left? As expected, Artpe is....."

"Yes. Yes. I'm amazing."

There were a total of seven Dungeons on the way to Frate. Most of them were similar to the small Dungeons he had pointed out to Silpennon. However, two were large Dungeons, and one needed 3 months to clear each of them.

Of course, it took 3 months for normal people without the Read All Creation ability.

"If we go through these Dungeons, Sienna should be at a level where she would be able to operate with us in Dungeons. Of course, this is all possible, because she has a special property that comes with being a Warrior Priestess."

"Really?"

"Of course. She isn't normal."

Sienna's talent was almost at a genius level.

Maetel was talented in all things except magic. Artpe was reborn as a hero possessing everything he had when he was one of the Four Heavenly Kings. Artpe's talent had been reinforced. Sienna was less talented than Artpe, but if the two of them never existed, Sienna probably would have become the hero. This was how great her potential was.

“In other words, we just have to provide a smooth flow of ingredients, and Sienna’s growth speed will become ridiculously fast. ”

In the past, the Demon King had used Demons as ingredients to make the hero into a delicious dish... He made her into a warrior. Now Artpe would use his Read All Creation ability alongside his memories of his past life. He would make Sienna into a fantastic member of the hero’s party. When he followed the Demon King’s orders, he had observed and learned what he the Demon King had done. Even if he was half as successful, he could turn Sienna into a monster!

“I’ll follow everything oppa tells me to do! If you want me to do something, I will do anything for you. Anything.”

When he saw Sienna’s blind affection and actions, it was as if he was looking at Maetel. This was why a sigh automatically slipped out of his mouth. When he finished having that thought, Maetel started growling at Sienna.

“Eeeeeeee. I don’t like it.”

“I like unni, but I like oppa much more!”

“I don’t like you!”

In Sienna’s case, she had retained her life thanks to Artpe by being turned into a different race. On top of that, he was teaching her about Mana. It wasn’t as if he couldn’t see why she followed him in such an unconditional manner.

In fact, the more he thought about it Maetel’s attitude felt different from Sienna’s attitude.

What the hell happened with his past self to make Maetel like this!

“Both of you are members of this party, and you will have entrust each other’s life to one another in the future.”

“I know I have to hold it back for Artpe, but I can’t get rid of my dislike for her!”

“I’m willing to entrust my life to unni!”

“The fact that you like me makes me not like you more. If you act like that, I can’t hate

you without feeling unsettled!"

Ah, maybe everything might turn out ok if it was like this. He looked at the growling Maetel, and the smiling Sienna. In the end, they were innocent children. When they grow older, their feelings would mature, and their behavior would get better too.

It wasn't as if he hated the flood of honest emotions directed towards him. Still, it would be much better without all this great fuss.

"I like oppa and unni. It would be great if all three of us could get along."

"I want to live in peace only with Artpe!"

'By the look of things, it doesn't seem things will calm down anytime soon.....'

Artpe kept letting out consecutive sighs as he continued to walk. He still had some complaints about his party members, but this was the start of the true hero's party!

If things went according to the Demon King's plan, Artpe and Maetel wouldn't have discovered the experiments occurring within the kingdom. Or maybe they would have discovered it too late. It was supposed to be a massive Quest that should have cost them blood, sweat and tears to resolve.

Unfortunately for the Demon king's army, Artpe had resolved everything at super speed. Artpe had messed up a long term plan that the Demon king's army planned on exploiting for about 3 years! He had ended it in just one day!

The Archduke hadn't even been able to progress much in the experiment that was supposed to turn humans into Demons, yet he had lost most of his troops. His influence had rapidly decreased, and of course, he was unable to receive support from the Demon. Artpe had basically ruined the plan of the Demon King's army in one fell swoop.

The Archduke had already used an unjust reason to take over the throne, so the nobles that had hated him rebelled against him. In the end, the Archduke was overthrown, and he had been chased out of the country.

The new king was the cousin of the previous king. Count Hadein was placed on the throne, but he was merely a puppet of the nobles. Still, the chaos within the Diaz Kingdom calmed down, so it was still a fortunate outcome.

It took them exactly one year.

“Hoo-ooh. It seems trade has been completely restored. Shit. This is why I wanted to get here earlier.”

“There are so many people here, Artpe! There are more people here than the people I’ve seen in my entire life!”

“Oppa, are we going to ride that ship?”

After a year, the hero’s party arrived at the harbor city of Frate.

Chapter 47

Two Hero's Party (4)

There was no business in this world that always worked out as planned. Artpe's party was so off course from his original plan that the only thing right was the fact that they were traveling in a straight line. The travel was filled with sighs, complaints and shouting.

Still, nothing significant happened during their one week march.

He had bought the highest quality bedrolls from Mycenae for each of the party members, but all three of them had to squeeze into one. It was a very tight fit, but it was also very warm and cozy. Maetel was in charge of harvesting herbs, while he started the fire. Sienna was in charge of cooking. This was how the daily chores were divvied up. It was a fantastic yet simple setup.

They didn't possess many clothes, so washing them was quite simple using Artpe's magic. There probably were few in this world that could travel as easily and comfortably as them.

They had traversed an incredible amount of distance in one week, so they had arrived at the first Dungeon one week ahead of schedule. The problem started when they entered the Dungeon.

It was a Dungeon where beast-type monster Gnolls appeared. They were humanoid monsters with a dog-like head. It was supposed to be a Dungeon with five floors with a variety of Gnolls ranging from level 30 to level 50.

Sienna was level 28, and she was of a race that could use powers that exceeded her level. This was why Artpe and Maetel merely had to make sure she didn't die. Aside from that fact, Sienna had free reigns to combat the Gnolls.

The Gnolls had similar build to a human, and they were quite clever. It allowed Sienna to gain a variety of battle experiences. Her level rose steadily as they traversed through the five floors, and the occasional high level monsters made it easy to increase Sienna's level.

Artpe had assumed it would be this way, and everything went as planned. A week passed after they entered the Dungeon, and Sienna bravely reached the 5th floor as she increased her level to 47.

“Huh, Artpe? Didn’t you say this Dungeon has five floors?”

The problem started from that moment.

“I did.”

‘In my past life....’

If it was Artpe’s words, Maetel trusted him implicitly even if there was no evidence to back up his words. Maetel tilted her head in puzzlement as she asked the question.

“So why is there a staircase leading further downwards?”

“That is a really good question.”

Artpe glared at the secret staircase that had appeared as if it had every right to be there. He spoke with a fed up voice.

“I’m not sure either....”

This was one of the Dungeon cleared by the past hero! He was sure it ended on the 5th floor. The items dropped here had been poor, but the weak hero had been able to develop her basic martial skills here. Artpe had found out this information when he researched the records.

Even if the Silpennon of that time had poor skills as a thief, Artpe never expected him to miss such an obvious secret staircase!

No, maybe the god was giving them something extra since there was an additional hero present?

He had researched about the human world and the hero, but he hadn’t been able to visit all the sites himself. This was why he waved the white flag. He had no way of determining which theory was correct.

Still, how could he retreat when a Dungeon’s secret had been revealed? Traditionally,

heroes entered into suspicious places first before asking any questions. They opened suspicious boxes first to see what is in it, and they stepped on suspicious traps first to see what happened.

They were psychopaths!

It wasn't as if they had extra lives to spare, yet they did things that were considered to be absolutely crazy. It seemed Artpe's party would be doing similar tasks that followed in the footsteps of those heroes!

"Sienna, the monsters we are going to face from now on will be a bit too hard for you to handle. This is why you have to be ready to retreat when I tell you to retreat."

As they got ready to head down the stairway, he made a strong entreaty towards Sienna. However, Sienna let out a bright smile as she tightened the fists equipped with the Battle Knuckles.

"It's fine. I'm strong now!"

"It is all thanks to me!"

Mycenae had a bright smile on her face as she stood behind Sienna with a money pouch in hand. She had finally succeeded in acquiring the Cleric's Cure spell and the Holy Battle spell. Artpe snorted as he shooed her away with his hand.

"You were barely able to acquire the basics. If possible, I want you to acquire weapon skills that are primarily for the Warrior Priestess class. Then there are the active skills....."

"You probably want skills and spell books that both of you can learn too?"

Mycenae laughed as if she already understood everything.

"I never dreamed there would come a day when I would be able support the hero. Anyways, please wait for me. Everything jumps in price when one wants to acquire goods so suddenly. I'm trying very hard to gather as many items at the cheapest price in the shortest amount of time possible.."

"All right. We'll put our trust in ajumma, and we....."

Artpe spoke as he took a step onto the stair leading down to the 6th floor of the Dungeon.

“We are going to go make some money now.”

It was as Artpe had expected. High rank Gnolls over level 60 started appearing in droves on the 6th floor. The Gnolls were equipped with decent armor and iron mace. These were opponents that was a bit overwhelming for Sienna.

Still, Artpe made a resolve to push her forward.

“When I think you are in danger, I’ll restrain them with my Mana Strings. Of course, your contribution would decrease, so you won’t be able to gain the full experience. The reward you will gain is ridiculously low compared to the danger you will face.... Still, you will surely grow faster than before.”

“Oppa.....”

If he just made sure she didn’t die, this environment would be a blessing for Sienna. Of course, she had to overcome the fear, pain and powerlessness she would feel facing such powerful enemies. Still, the fruit that would be waiting for her at the end would be very sweet.

“This is similar to the first Dungeon I experienced with Artpe. I had a lot of shortcomings, but Artpe helped me.”

“Now I can provide a much more precise and faster support.”

Artpe became more proficient at using Mana Strings as he used them more.

The Mana Strings were very sensitive and reactive to the movement of his fingers. He could use up to 10 strands. In the playground called a Dungeon, he could use them to search, deter, attack and defend. In the space controlled by his Read All Creation Ability, nothing could escape his will.

“Oppa.”

Sienna’s expression remained bright.

“If oppa says I can do it, then I can do it!”

“.....all right.”

He experienced facing too many opponents that were much higher in level with Maetel in the past year, so this all seemed par for the course. However, amongst the adventurers that explored Dungeons, their actions were beyond reckless. This situation was considered to be something that should never be done.

On top of that, Sienna wasn't a hero, yet she had to go through such tribulations. It would be a lie to say that he wasn't worried about all of this.

“Let's do this.”

“Yes!”

However, Artpe had confidence in Sienna's talent and will. He was also supremely confident about his own abilities. This was why he decided to go forward with her. The Gnolls shrank away at the presence of Artpe and Maetel, but they became emboldened when they caught sight of Sienna. They howled as they attack Sienna as a pack.

[Ggae-gae-gaeng!]

[Koo-hwahk!]

Two thirds of the pack was instantly slaughtered by Maetel's bastard sword. The remaining Gnolls flinched as they tried to run away, but Artpe prevented them from doing so with his Mana Strings.

[Goo-ohhhhhhng?]

[Ooh-ohhhhhhhhhh!]

Some unknown force was preventing them from running away, so they became confused for a brief amount of time. However, when they realized there wasn't an additional strike coming as a follow up, the Gnolls once again turned their attention to Sienna.

Artpe gave an explanation.

“The dog head of Gnolls isn't just a decoration. They are very dumb.”

“I think they are more stupid than the Skeletons with no brains.”

It was the worst insult that could come out of Maetel’s mouth. However, when one saw the Gnolls keep attacking with increased fervor as if nothing had happened, it was an apt observation.

“Koo-oohk…… I can do this!”

Sienna was the only one fighting them, and she had a hardened expression on her face. Her fists were still weak, and her self-healing ability was lacking. However, she didn’t back down as she glared at her opponents. At this point, Artpe would have already given her a passing grade.

[Koo-ohhhhhhhng!]

[Ah-ooooooooh! Gah-roo-roo-roo-roo!]

The Gnolls mindlessly howled as they swung their maces. Sienna quickly assessed their attacks, and she planted her fists into their abdomens. She couldn’t avoid all the maces, yet she was showing excellent body movement for someone that wasn’t level 50 yet.

“All right. We did it.”

“Yes, I dont’ think she’ll die.”

Sienna was effectively fighting amongst the pack of Gnolls. Artpe let out a sigh of relief when he confirmed this. Her growth plan had to be tweaked, but he also judged that she would be able to become much stronger in a shorter time frame.

“Hoo-ahhhhhhhhp!”

Sienna was striking out with powerful punches. Her fist cleanly lodged inside the eye of a Gnoll as she was able to land a Critical Hit. At that moment, the flow of the battle started turning towards her favor.

[Kwehhhhhhhhk!]

[Koo-hee!?!]

“.....hooo.”

Humans were supposed to be weaker than them, yet one of their own had been killed. This truth made the Gnolls rage....

However, a marvelous smile on Sienna’s face greeted the Gnolls.

Sienna just had an epiphany about the flow and momentum of a battle.

After two days within the Dungeon, Sienna safely raised her level to 50.

She used the Crystal Ball of Blessing to acquire the high rank Class as a Warrior Priestess.

From that point on, there was a jump in her growth.

As time passed, Artpe had to step forward less with his Mana Strings. It was proof that the degree to which she was contributing to the battle had increased. When they slaughtered all the monsters and found all the hidden treasures on the 6th floor, her level had reached 60.

“Still, we are fortunate that this place is easier than the Hero’s Dungeon, Artpe. Isn’t it?”

“Just the thought of that place makes me grind my teeth. Don’t talk to me about it.”

“Where the heck did unni and oppa go that you guys speak of it that way.....?”

The Dungeon slyly extended into the 8th floor. Fortunately for them, the floor didn’t reach double digits like the disaster that was the Hero’s Growth Dungeon.

[Koo-ahhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

“Hahp!”

In the Boss Room on the 8th floor, Sienna safely killed the level 75 Gnoll Chieftain in a one on one battle. Sienna proudly took its Sledge Hammer as a trophy.

The head of the black steel hammer was unusually large and sharp. It wasn’t something a level 75 Gnoll should be using. At this point, Artpe once again felt that the

luck of the hero's party was a cheat.

"Oh my, customer. Could it be that the metal used to make that helmet was....."

"I'm not selling it."

"Customer, you are too much!"

Mycenae appeared once again with impeccable timing. This time she hadn't just acquired hand to hand combat skills. She had brought weapon skills too.

Mycenae was about to say something, because she felt sorry for the small girl carrying around such a large hammer. However, her words dried up when she saw Sienna swing it around with both hands.

"I thought it would take us one week to clear this Dungeon, yet we spent one month here. Mmm. Perfect. This is such a perfectly fucked up situation."

"Because of me.... I'm sorry, oppa..... I'll fight harder next time!"

"No, you were fine. Actually, you really overdid yourself. The only reason why this situation is fucked up is because of god."

"If so, I'll kill god for oppa!"

He thought he had heard that line from somewhere before. He let out a big sigh.

Maetel once again showed her competitive spirit when she heard Sienna's words. Sienna kept letting out a bright smile.

Afterwards, a similar pattern emerged.

Fortunately, there was no changes to the second Dungeon. However, they found a secret tunnel inside the third Dungeon that continued until the 14th floor.

While they were traveling towards the fourth Dungeon, they encountered a cursed old lady living in a small city. They had to waste time in curing her. Then the 5th Dungeon was a Dungeon filled with Undeads, and Sienna stumbled into a secret prerequisite by being a Warrior Priestess. A path of suffering opened up that led the party down to the 20th floor.

They encountered similar harsh difficulties on the sixth and seventh Dungeons. At that point, Sienna hadn't just grown enough for a single person. She grew enough for three to five people to become an superb Warrior Priestess.

She smashed through all tribulation, which seemed to have been prepared for her, with her hammer. If she couldn't handle a boss monster, Maetel and Artpe smashed it.

They had entered the Dungeons to help the development of the little Warrior Priestess.

However, the difficulty of the Dungeons were all over the place that even the heroes increased in their level. The word chaos was insufficient to describe their situation.

"Wow. That's the ocean! It really is amazing! Pretty!"

"This is also my first time seeing the ocean, unni. Wa-ahhhh."

At the end of the tribulation, they finally reached Frate. At the latest, he had planned on arriving here during early spring. However, they had arrived during summer when the warm winds could be felt. Thankfully, they hadn't arrived here during fall. Artpe kept wiping away at the sweat that kept trickling into his eyes as he spoke to his party.

"Well..... Shall we go rest a little bit?"

"Yes!"

It was the day they entered into Frate.

Maetel was level 191, and Artpe was level 187. Sienna had reached the level 159.



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